the settlement of which it forms part represents the hamlet on the council of the settlement and receives in consequence a robe of honour from the king or from the chief of the settlement. If his hamlet is only a subsidiary seat of a lineage in the settlement he is regarded merely as its senior member.

The settlement to which I have just referred is called *pouth*, a word which has a number of meanings but generally designates a group of hamlets, occupied by different lineages, which, though there may be much competition between them, unite for defence, for the ritual of age-sets (an institution otherwise of little political importance), and in intersettlement and national affairs, and have a common chief. There are about a hundred of these settlements in Shillukland, each having a population of from less than 100 to more than 600 adult males. They are structurally distinct groups of a political kind though the distance that divides a settlement from adjacent settlements may be no greater than that which separates a hamlet from its nearest neighbours in the same settlement.

In every settlement there is a dominant lineage, the *dyil*, the owners of the soil, with whom the various stranger and immigrant accretions (*wedh*) identify themselves politically and with whom they

of new territorial units. Colonies of the same lineage are found in several settlements, so that in any settlement several different descent groups are represented, one of them, as I have already explained, being always dominant in it and identified with the settlement politically. Although the dispersed lineages of a clan do not intermarry, and sometimes acknowledge their common descent in other ways, a man generally thinks in terms of his localized lineage, reference being usually to the ancestor who founded the lineage in his settlement. It is interesting to note a further common feature of lineage systems: the descendants of a man who has settled with his wife's people trace their descent through the wife to the lineage in whose home they live. This practice is, as among the other Nilotic peoples, one of the ways in which stranger lineages are grafted into the genealogical structure of the dominant lineage in a settlement. However, until we know more than we do at present about the distribution of lineages, about their genealogical structure, and about the part they play in inter-settlement relations it will not be possible to estimate fully their political significance.

All the Shilluk settlements compose a common polity, the kingdom of Shillukland. They are

Northern Shillukland and southern Shillukland 631
are the arches of the politico-religious kingdom of
the Shilluk of which the kingship is the keystone.
That segmentation has taken this particular form
is doubtless due to the peculiar ribbon-distribution
of the Shilluk settlements.

The whole Shilluk people recognize a single 643
head and we can therefore speak of the Shilluk 173
nation and of their king, and it is with his place in
the national polity that this lecture is particularly
concerned. According to Shilluk tradition the
present king is the thirty-first of his line. All the
kings are believed to be descended from Nyikang,
the leader of the Shilluk in their heroic age, who
led them into their present homeland, conquering
it from its inhabitants and dividing it among the
lineages of his followers; and Nyikang, or, as we
would say, the spirit of Nyikang, is believed to be
in every king and to have passed from king to king
down the line of his successors. Nyikang is thus
a mythological personification of the timeless king-
ship which itself symbolizes the national structure,
a changeless moral order.

The rule of succession is that only a son of a king
can be invested with the kingship. As many sons 644
of kings have never succeeded to the throne, there 565
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1.Evans-Pritchard E-4 (no date) 1948
FTZS Shilluk FJZS

He makes sacrifices on important occasions, especially for rain and for victory in war, and it is his duty to provide cattle for the sacred herds of Nyikang at Nyilual and Wau and a canoe for Nyikang's shrine at Nyibodho. Nyikang, the culture hero of the Shilluk, their first king, and the creator of their nation, is immanent in him and this makes him the double pivot of Shilluk society, the political head of the nation and the centre of the national cult. The kingship is the common symbol of the Shilluk people and, Nyikang being immortal, an abiding institution which binds past and present and future generations.

The correspondence of political structure with religious cult can be seen at every point of the structure. The territorial segments of the nation and their association with lineages is, as we have noted, validated by the myth of Nyikang's parcelling out of his conquests among the clans, the strands of which are, moreover, caught up into a single mythological point, Nyikang. Some trace their descent from his companions, some from his collateral relatives, others from the original inhabitants of the country conquered by him, and yet others from men who played some part in his saga. The lineage heads who are the chiefs of settlements have ritual duties to the kingship: in

1 [i.e., the King. - Ms/pdf] 17

particular, ceremonial services at the king's investiture, the building of huts at Fashoda, which is both the royal capital and the cult centre of Nyikang, and the upkeep of Nyikang's other shrines and those of past kings. These shrines are widely distributed throughout the country so that every section of it participates in the cult of Nyikang, who is, it must be borne in mind, not only the semi-divine hero of Shilluk mythology but also the king at every period of their history. Indeed, the shrines of Nyikang, what Professor Seligman calls his cenotaphs, are indistinguishable from the tomb-shrines of dead kings and they have the same ceremonial functions in the life of the people: in the rain-making ceremonies, at harvest time, and in times of sickness and pestilence.[1] The religion and cosmogony of the Shilluk are bound up with the political system through the identification of Nyikang with the king. The kingship stands at the centre of Shilluk moral values.

We can only understand the place of the kingship in Shilluk society when we realize that it is not the individual at any time reigning who is king, but

[1] Prof. C. G. Seligman, 'The Cult of Nyakang and the Divine Kings of the Shilluk', *Report of the Wellcome Tropical Research Laboratories* (1911), pp. 221 and 225.

It is more a clan, than a national, affair. The election of the new king, which takes place a few days after his predecessor's death, is, on the contrary, an affair of the whole Shilluk people, who participate in the election through the chiefs of the north and the south, to whom I have already referred.

These persons reflect in their roles in the election and in the ceremonies of investiture the structural dichotomy of Shillukland. We have seen that the Shilluk kingdom has a double configuration, political in its territorial setting, in its division into north and south and marches and settlements, and ritual in its religious setting, its arrangement in relation to the cult of Nyikang. In the ritual configuration the dichotomy is represented by the ceremonial division of the country into Gol Dhiang the northern division, and Gol Nyikang, the southern division, which correspond structurally to the political division of the kingdom into Ger, the northern half, and Luak, the southern half, though geographically they are not exactly coterminous. The chiefs of the ceremonial divisions in this ritual representation of the Shilluk polity are also the political chiefs of Golbany and Kwom, the two settlements which are to the north and south adjacent to the capital and cult-centre,

1.Evans-Pritchard E-4 (no date) 1948
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enactment of this central dogma, that it is not an individual who belongs to a particular clan or to a particular part of the country who is king, but Nyikang in whom are the continuity and welfare of the whole Shilluk people.

## *ROYAL SUCCESSION AND REGICIDE*

We may now examine, in the light of what we have learnt about the position of the kingship in Shilluk society and particularly about the polarity so clearly expressed in the ceremonies I have reviewed, the mode of succession to royal office and the tradition of regicide which is so closely connected with it. Although Professor and Mrs Seligman say, 'We found no basis for the belief, common among Europeans in the Shilluk country, that there were two, or even three or four, branches of the royal house from which the kings were elected in turn',[1] the early *Sudan Intelligence Reports* make it clear that this was the case in recent decades and also that rivalry between claimants to the kingship in the second half of the nineteenth century was connected with the balanced opposition between north and south, for the halves of the kingdom fairly

[1] *Pagan Tribes of the Nilotic Sudan*, pp. 44–5.

consistently supported rival candidates.

Evans-Pritchard E-4 (no date) 1948
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consistently supported rival candidates. Moreover, it is difficult to believe that the practice of the present day, by which it is more or less understood that the surviving lines of kings take it in turn to provide the king,[1] is new. A collateral royal line does not to-day contest an election on the understanding that they have next turn. The custom is for the reigning king to take under his wing a scion of a rival line and by so doing to indicate him as his successor, though he cannot nominate him and his choice may not be followed by the people. When this prince becomes king he takes under his wing a son of his protector. The reigning king insures by this convention against both rebellion by a rival line and his own line being excluded from the kingship in the future.

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There can be no doubt that in recent times there has been an alternation on the throne of branches of the royal house, nor that the alternation is related to the structural dichotomy of Shillukland. We are told that if the ceremonial chiefs of the north and south fail to reach agreement in the election of a new king the chiefs of the northern settlements follow their representative and the

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[1] Westermann, *op. cit.* p. xlvi; Hofmayr, *op. cit.* p. 145; Howell and Thomson, *op. cit.* p. 27.

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643 chiefs of the southern settlements follow their
649 representative and the issue is fought out. It would seem probable that when there is disagreement it is an expression not of divergence of opinion about the merits of the candidates but of local loyalties in which different members of the royal house are associated with different parts of Shilluk-land. Whether disputed succession in the past was a product of local rivalries cannot perhaps now be determined, but it seems likely in view of the fact that in earlier times the king ruled from the settlement in which he was brought up or moved from one settlement to another and did not have a fixed residence at the central and neutral point of Fashoda.[1] I would also suggest that the association of princes with settlements and districts is clearly related to the custom by which they are brought up away from the capital. It is probable that the backing given by north and south to candidates for the kingship in past times arose from the fact that some princes were brought up in the north and some in the south. That this is the case is clear
[114] from Father Hofmayr's detailed notes on each of

[1] Seligman, *Report of the Wellcome Tropical Research Laboratories*, p. 229, citing information given by Father Banholzer and Dr Lambie; Westermann, *op. cit.* p. 138; Hofmayr, *op. cit.* p. 76.

the Shilluk kings.[1] It is easy to determine because the shrines of dead kings are still maintained to-day where they were born and brought up. I would further suggest that the maternal descent of princes may be of great significance in that it may be the association of maternal lineages with settlements which attaches local loyalties to a particular prince or to a particular branch of the royal house. It is therefore important that the maternal clans of the Shilluk kings should be recorded by some future observer.

The Shilluk statement that kings should be put to death if they grow old or become sick and their further statement that any prince may at any time challenge the king to mortal combat, in which the king may not call for help, cannot, I think, like the mode of succession, be understood except in relation to the political structure as a whole. There is only traditional evidence that any king has ever been killed in either way but, as Mr Howell and Mr Thomson point out,[2] the belief that kings have been, or might be, so killed has political implications. The assertion that a sick or old king should be killed probably means that when some disaster falls upon the Shilluk nation the tensions inherent

[1] *Op. cit.* pp. 59–136. [2] *Op. cit.* p. 11.

2:Seligman & Seligman E-5 (1909-1910) 1932
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when the mosquitoes are really bad the cattle are tied for the night in the open, generally in the centre of the village. Fires of dried cow-dung are kept smouldering all night, and the herdsmen smear themselves with the ashes. In the dry season when the grass gives out the young men and boys drive the cattle long distances to fresh pastures; the Shilluk of the White Nile cross to the eastern bank, those of the Sobat migrate to the lagoons to the south of Sobat.

Fish are speared and trapped, and the hippopotamus, the flesh of which is greatly esteemed, is harpooned. The Shilluk, who are by no means expert trackers, hunt by surrounding an area and spearing the animals as they attempt to escape from the constricting circle, but game procured in this manner plays only a small part in their diet.

The Shilluk are excellent craftsmen. The thatching of the royal shrines and those of Nyakang is perhaps the best in the riverain portion of the Sudan, and this applies equally to their iron work, though they do not extract the metal from the ore but obtain it by trade—formerly from the Dinka, now from the white man. Their spears are the best that we saw in the southern Sudan. There is no special group of smiths, and iron-workers are not despised. They make good but not remarkable pottery. Their dug-out canoes are necessarily small, as the only wood is the *doleb* palm (*Borassus flabellifer*). In the north, where other wood is available in small quantities, the sides of the canoe are commonly heightened by built-on strips; possibly this practice is modern, but it is not absolutely new, as we noted it more than twenty years ago. Besides canoes, the Shilluk make small rafts of sesbanch which resemble the reed rafts of the ancient Egyptians.

## Regulation of Public Life

The Shilluk king is absolute head—temporal and spiritual—of a state whose territory is divided into a number of provinces, each administered by a chief directly responsible to the sovereign and acting as his proxy. We are indebted to Mr. Hemsty for the following account of the areas into which the country is divided. The two main divisions are Lwak and Gar. The former comprises all the country south of and including the capital Fashoda, with its provincial capital Kwom, and here resides one of the great territorial chiefs mentioned

2 Seligman & Seligman E-9 (1909-1910) 1932
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●631 on page 45. Gar, the northern division, has Colbuli as its capital. Each division has five provinces; those of Lwak from south to north are Tung or Tonga, Odong or Panyikang (Fenikang, with capital Fenikang, containing the great shrine of Nyakang, perhaps the holiest of all Shilluk shrines), Adiel or Didiin, and Padit, while Gar is divided into Didwok, Dimoth, Nom, Dhyang Dwong, and Jangwiang; the two latter are more or less equivalent to the geographical area called Mwom, embracing the most northerly portion of the Shilluk kingdom with its capital Akurwa, the site of one of the most important shrines of Nyakang.

[778] The chiefs of Mwom and Tonga were said to wield most power; the chief of Kwom is naturally somewhat eclipsed by the presence of the king in this district.

361 It is difficult to describe a Shilluk village; in fact, the word is hardly applicable to the Shilluk settlement. In typical Shilluk country on the west bank a series of small hamlets may be seen lying from a quarter to a mile or more back from the river, succeeding each other, as has been well said, like beads on a string. Most of these hamlets are small, consisting of only a few homesteads. Each homestead 592 belongs to one householder and contains some three or four huts 342 surrounded by a fence of millet stalks. One hut is the sleeping apartment of the householder and his wife—if there is more than one wife each woman will have her own hut—one is used for cooking, and others may be assigned to servants, or slaves if any are attached to the family. The householders in each hamlet are members of a single 619 clan, with descent in the male line, and are often closely related by 621 blood.

Thus the hamlet is both a social and a local group, and though the usual word for clan is *kwo* (which is also used for "family" or "ancestor", and for "grandfather") our informants at Fenikang often used the territorial prefix *pa* (or *fa*), which literally means "place", for the group that occupied one hamlet. It is clear that members of the same *kwo* are clansmen, whether they dwell in one hamlet or are located at a distance. Another word that seemed to have the same significance was *gol*. Actually, as Mr. Henry 613 informs us, this is a smaller unit formed within the *kwo*, arising 614 through some influential man starting a settlement of his own, when 621 his descendants (living there) form his *gol* until they become a large and powerful unit, take a new name, and become a *kwo*. Thus the *gol* Nyikako near Doleib Hill takes its name from an influential

2:Seligman & Seligman E-5 (1909-1910) 1932
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man of that name; should this *gol* become strong enough, it will take a new name and become *kwa* Kako. This agrees well with Westermann's statement that *gol* means enclosure, home, homestead, family. It is seen in the names of some sections, e.g. Golobogu, corresponding with the *kwa* Obogo of Westermann.

Several hamlets in the midst of their cultivation patches form a *fane*, which might be called a village group, under a chief (*jago*). A number of *fane*, each with its own grazing ground (*wak*), form a *fodo* (district), a number of *fodo* going to form each of the ten provinces of the Shilluk kingdom.

Fenikang, which is relatively large for a Shilluk village, consists of only two clans, the Golobogu and Pameiti, both traditionally attached to the great shrine. As their homesteads are built in two groups round the dancing space by the shrine, Fenikang corresponds more to our idea of a village than do most of the groups of isolated Shilluk hamlets, while Fashoda, with perhaps forty to fifty homesteads, has a special organization since it is inhabited only by royal wives and a few herdsmen. As a rule the number of homesteads in any Shilluk village is not great; there are, however, some large "villages". Atwadoi, north of Kodok, is, or was, the largest, and in 1903 was said to contain 120 homesteads.

As regards the clans themselves, Westermann gives a formidable list[1]; actually many of these are not clans; he mistakenly raises a number of princely families to clan rank (e.g. *kwa* Nyadwai, the descendants of King Nyadwai) and he also includes a *kwa* Nikai, which, as Hofmayr points out,[2] stands for *kwa* Nyakai, i.e. the family of Nyakai, the crocodile mother of Nyakang (pp. 85–6) who is "related" to every member of the royal family. Whether families founded by foreigners have attained true clan rank, e.g. *kwa* Okogi, we cannot say, but it may well be so.

There are numerous observances connected with animals, including some which might be called taboos, but we did not ourselves discover any definite evidence of totemism, though as already stated clan exogamy prevails. On the other hand both Westermann and Hofmayr consider that totemism exists. Westermann gives the following example:—

> "The ostrich and the crow and Deng were split out of the gourd, all three are three-twin children. Deng went into a certain village, the ostrich went into the bush, and the crow flew up. We were born by Deng. Akwoe (the

[1] Op. cit., 127–34. [2] Op. cit., 237, where Westermann's list is criticised.

2:Seligman & Seligman E-5 (1909-1910) 1932
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two, or even three or four, branches of the royal house from which the kings were elected in turn. From the genealogy it may be seen that sons of kings have succeeded their fathers but that this is by no means the rule; the succession may pass to brothers, ortho-cousins, or paternal nephew, and in one case a paternal uncle succeeded his brother's son. What is clear is that all recent kings have been descendants of the brothers Akwot (19) and Nyadok (22). Each of these kings had two sons who eventually came to the throne, and all their direct descendants are eligible from the Shilluk point of view. But we could not discover any rule dictating from which of these houses the royal candidates for the throne should be chosen. It is certain that each house would press its claim. There seem very good reasons why the sons of the twenty-seventh and the twenty-eighth kings have not come to the throne, and apart from Government influence it may be that their lines will have less claim in the future, since Kur, the twenty-seventh king, did not meet his death as a Shilluk king should but was deposed by the Government and died in confinement in the northern Sudan. Fadiet, the twenty-eighth king, succeeded with the approval of the Government, but many of the Shilluk did not recognize him as legitimate during the lifetime of Kur. It must have been quite impossible to carry out the ritual enthronement in the correct spirit while a former king was still living; certainly a son of Kur could not have come to the throne during the lifetime of his father, while as to Fadiet, he was neither popular nor efficient.

Tribute is paid to the king, but his sovereignty is largely exercised through the high-chiefs (*jang duong*) of the great provinces into which the realm is divided. The selection of these officers—who tend to be hereditary—is in the hands of the king, but the approval of the community is sought, and it is probably these chiefs who form the "great council" mentioned by Hofmayr, which is summoned by the king in exceptional cases.[1] Hofmayr also states that the king's messengers are usually relatives of the king. The high-chiefs of the provinces accompany the king on his journeys.

The greatest respect and honour is shown to the king. In the old days he was not allowed to go to battle, and even now he keeps up considerable state and has much authority. Even a royal son addresses the king with face somewhat averted, the left hand hiding the mouth and lower part of the face; this he does sitting at ease,

[1] Op. cit., 151–2.

3:Westermann E-5 (1910) 1912 FJ23 Shilluk FJ23

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and everything he possessed became the property of the king.

DIVISION OF THE COUNTRY

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The country is divided into 63 districts (vide page 127), every one of which is presided by a district chief; each village again has its own chief. The district and village chiefs are appointed and may be deposed by the king. Quarrels and law-suits may be judged by the local or district chief, but an appeal to the king is always possible. Common affairs of a village and minor judicial cases are judged by the local chief together with the old men of the village. They sit on such occasions in a circle in the village yard, in the shade of a tree, if there is one. If the meeting is secret, or if the weather is bad, they assemble in the cow-house.

## VI. ETHNICAL COMPONENTS OF THE SHILLUK PEOPLE.

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EARLY INHABITANTS OF THE COUNTRY

When Nyikang arrived in what is now the Shilluk country, the latter was inhabited by other tribes, who probably were partly of dark, and partly of fair colour. These inhabitants were either expelled or subdued and then incorporated into the Shilluk nation. This process is clearly reflected in the traditions. Among others Nyikang found the "red strangers" in the country, which he either defeated and made them tributary, or drove out of their residences (vide page 163 ff). These "red strangers" seem to be Arabs. But apart from them the traditions speak of fabulous beings who were partly men and partly animal; Nyikang fought with them, and when defeated, transformed them into real men and settled them in villages. They are probably the original negro inhabitants of the present Shilluk country, who up to this day form the essential part of the Shilluk people, a discrimination being made between them and the "people of Nyikang."

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SOCIAL ORGANISATION

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The latter form, so to say, a nobility. The first in rank is the royal family and all members of it, that is all persons who can claim descendency from Nyikang. The male members of the royal family bear the title *Kwa ríi* "descendant of the king", and are shown special deference. In several of the historical traditions the king or the royal family expressly distinguish themselves from the common Shilluks; in these connections the name "Shilluk" is even used in an abusive way: "merely a Shilluk", vide page 233. Probably the name of the Shilluks *chāle* means "black"; in some nearly related languages the word has this meaning. This makes it probable that Nyikang and his people, or, the members of the royal family, were originally of lighter colour, as only this would give them a reason for calling the population they found inhabiting the country, "blacks".

The Shilluk settlement is open, on the other hand, to certain structural weaknesses which follow from its internal organisation. These are pointed out by Pumphrey.(1) Each *wedh* kinship group has a dual loyalty - to its own lineage and to the settlement as represented by the *jago* and the dominant lineage. Only if the settlement chief and his lineage are strong are the loyalties of the hamlet lineages submerged in the larger unit. The cohesion of the settlement is, however, favoured in the rainy season owing to the fact that travelling is difficult and the community tends to be isolated. At such times the influence of the Shilluk *reth* is diminished and he has to rely on the loyalty of the settlement chief; isolation also increases the feeling of unity and the Shilluk clans, being dispersed and without territorial cohesion, are placed at a disadvantage.

Each lineage represented within a settlement has its original hamlet, the *pan dwong*, founded by the original immigrant who started the lineage in the settlement, and this is at the head of all hamlets of the lineage which have subsequently been formed in the settlement. The lineage head is the chief of the *pan dwong* and represents his lineage in the administration of the settlement unit. New hamlets are continually being founded by ambitious young men - usually in the same settlement as the parent hamlet and subservient to it, but occasionally they are started in another part of the country. The offshoots from the original hamlet *(pan dwong)* in the same settlement are called *nyole nyer* and are included under the name of the original hamlet, but if some grow important and large they will acquire separate names. Some originally powerful hamlets may eventually disintegrate altogether.

The lineages, and therefore the hamlets within a settlement, are closely related through kinship ties of one sort and another. A common feature in many lineage systems, and one which is also found among the Shilluk, is that the descendants of a man who has settled with his wife's people trace their descent through the female link to the lineage in whose home they live. Howell quotes specific instances in which this occurred in a settlement.(2)

The *wedh* lineages are thus grafted on to the dominant lineages of a settlement. Intermarriage occurs between members and relationship is traced through female links, the *wedh* lineage becoming 'sister's sons', and thus the structural differentiation within a settlement is greatly mitigated. The settlement is an integrated unit bound together by territorial unity, common economic and legal interests, allegiance to one chief and to a dominant lineage to which all are connected in some way, and finally, bound by the necessity of mutual co-operation during the rainy season and in times of danger from outside sources. To counterbalance this, there are lineage loyalties and lines of structural cleavage within the settlement. These, in certain circumstances, such as weak leadership and dissatisfaction with their representation by the chief to the central authority, may cause the settlement unit to be rent by internal feuds and fissions.

*Divisions*

There are 11 divisions as follows:-(3)

(1) Pumphrey, *S.N.R.* 1941, Vol.XXIV, p.7. (2) Howell, *S.N.R.* 1941, Vol.XXIV, p.55.
(3) Howell and Thompson, *S.N.R.* 1946, Vol.XXVII, Fig.2.

NORTHERN PROVINCE (GERR)

631 Muomo Dalalajak Athodwoi Detwok Golbany Fashoda

SOUTHERN PROVINCE (LUAK)

Wau Malakal Datim Fanyikang Tung

These have little political importance though they are said to have been made by the order of Nyikang. They have the tradition of co-operation when necessary to meet a common danger or a difficult situation. This tendency of contiguous settlements to combine for warfare was utilised by the Turkish government and is now used by the Anglo-Egyptian government to form administrative units. Originally, the associations were not permanent enough to be regarded as politically important.

*The Provinces*

Shilluk country is divided into two great provinces, Gerr and Luak (Northern Shillukland and Southern Shillukland), which are ritually important but have little administrative significance. The boundary dividing the two provinces is a water-course called Khor Arepajur, just south of Fashoda. The chief of Debalo Kwom, just south of Arepajur, is, through his office, the chief of Luak. The chief of the settlement of Golban, north of Khor Arepajur, is chief of Gerr.

Apart from these, only two other chiefs and divisions counted. These were the chiefs of the settlements forming the northernmost and southernmost regions of Shillukland, the chiefs of Muomo and Tonga.(1) Fashoda, the capital of Shillukland, occupied by the *reth*, is the focal point of the structure of the Shilluk people and this is clearly seen, not only in administrative matters but in ritual and myth and in the circumstances surrounding the installation of the *reth*.

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SOCIAL DIVISIONS

614 The Shilluk people are divided into four main classes or groups of clans:

*The Kwareth*

565 614 644 This is the royal clan, the largest of all clans and, like the others, is spread through all parts of the country. All members trace their descent, in the male line, from Nyikang and only a member of the royal clan and one whose father has been a *reth* is eligible for election to the kingship. Within the *kwareth* are four main titles.

(a) *Reth* - The reigning king.
(b) *Nyireth* - The son or daughter of a *reth* - whether reigning or dead.

(1) See Evans-Pritchard, *The Divine Kingship of the Shilluk*, 1948, p.9.

his lineage in the settlement and, if he is a representative of the *dyil* lineage, he will have a special status as representing the owners of the land and the *jago* will treat him tactfully. The hamlet headman has charge of affairs within his unit and represents his people in external affairs.

*The Gol Leader*

The owner of a homestead is responsible for the unmarried members of his *gol*, but has no special status. The correspondence between territorial divisions and their representatives may be charted as below. (After Pumphrey, *S.N.R.* 1941, Vol.XXIV, p.7.)

| TERRITORIAL DIVISIONS | REPRESENTATIVE AUTHORITY |
|---|---|
| Shilluk Tribe | The *Reth* |
| Luak & Gerr Provinces | Chiefs of Gol Nyikang & Gol Dhiang |
| Northern & Southern Marches | Chiefs of Mumo & Tonga |
| .....Division *(Luak)*..... | .....Division or Court Chief..... |
| Settlement *(Podh)* | *Jago* |
| Hamlet *(Pac)* | *Jal dwong pac* |
| Homestead *(Gol)* | *Jal Gol* |

(Dotted line indicates permanent administrative divisions with chiefs made by the Anglo-Egyptian Government. Previously, there were no permanent intermediate territorial units between the two provinces and marches and the settlements.)

THE RETH'S POLITICAL POWER

The actual degree of power possessed by the *reth* has been a matter for dispute among anthropologists. The majority of the early writers stressed his power and authority. Seligman writes, "The Shilluk king is absolute Head temporal and spiritual.."(1) Westermann and others have said likewise. Evans-Pritchard and other recent writers suggest that in administrative matters, the *reth* is not so powerful.

The chiefs of settlements and the hamlet heads are confirmed in their offices by the *reth*. In no case, however, does he nominate them, for they are elected by the people of the units they represent in virtue of their positions as heads of lineages dominant in the area. Likewise the chiefs of the provinces and of the northern and southern marches are traditionally determined and persons who are eligible cannot be passed over for reasons of political expediency. On the other hand, the chiefs owe their *reth* certain duties and are responsible to him for the state of their districts and their inhabitants, for defence of the settlement area and for the collection of tribute. If there is a choice of candidates for any position, each having the necessary ability and lineage qualifications, it is conceivable that the *reth* might use his influence to have as chief the man most amenable to his wishes; otherwise he appears to have little chance of exerting influence on the choice of his local officials.

(1) Seligman, *Pagan Tribes of the Nilotic Sudan*, 1932, p.39.

It would appear, therefore, that in judicial and administrative matters the Shilluk *reth* is far from being an over-riding or autocratic political authority. Local chiefs seem to be free to follow their own traditional courses without much interference. In actual powers of government and administration, and in personal prerogative, the *reth* may be little more than a mediator in disputes and perhaps the balancing force which decides a quarrel one way or another. It is in ritual matters that his real position and powers are indicated.

## THE RITUAL SIGNIFICANCE OF THE RETH

Evans-Pritchard writes: "Both his functions and his status are primarily of a ritual order. He makes sacrifices on important occasions, especially for rain and for victory in war, and it is his duty to provide cattle for the sacred herds of Nyikang at Nyilual and Wau and a canoe for Nyikang's shrine at Nyibodho.(1)

It is noticeable that everywhere there is the closest connection between the political structure and the religious cult.

(a) The territorial segments and their association with certain dominant lineages are explained in terms of the myth of Nyikang's division of the country among his followers who became the founding ancestors of many of the Shilluk clans.

(b) The lineage heads who are chiefs of settlements have ritual duties to the kingship. They perform ceremonial services at the time of the *reth*'s investiture, are responsible for building huts in Fashoda and for the upkeep of Nyikang's shrines and those of past *reths*. The tombs of the dead kings are indistinguishable from the shrines of Nyikang and have the same ceremonial importance in rain-making ceremonies, harvest rituals and so forth.

(c) The traditional customs of the people and the organization of society in every way are considered to be the work of Nyikang directly or acting in the line of *reths*.

(d) The identification of Nyikang with the king is the central point of the Shilluk political, ritual and moral system. The people believe that Nyikang reigns and manifests himself in the *reth*. Nyikang is also the medium between the Shilluk and Juok - their chief spirit. The Shilluk consider the *reth* to be in close communication with the mystic forces of life, and Nyikang is the connecting link, participating in Juok as he does in the *reth*.(2)

The *reth* is considered to come under the category of Divine Kings, as described by Frazer in *The Golden Bough*. This is clear from the mode of his death and succession as well as from the duties he performs during his lifetime.

### *Succession of the Reth*

Only the son of a *reth* who has reigned is eligible, and a *nyireth* may

(1) Evans-Pritchard, *The Divine Kingship of the Shilluk*, 1948, pp. 16-17.
(2) *Ibid.*, p. 19.

symbol of unity and cohesion. The main events are as follows:- 643

The funeral of the dead *reth* is carried out and is followed, a year later, by mortuary ceremonies and funeral dances. These events are chiefly a family affair and are organised by the *ororo* and the *kwareth*.

The election of the *reth* concerns the whole of the Shilluk people who are represented by the chiefs of the North and South Provinces. The *reth* is chosen from among the *nyireth* by an electoral college, composed of the descendants of the men who were, traditionally, made chiefs of the first degree by Nyikang when he parcelled out the country between eleven of his followers.(1) Three representatives from the *kwareth* are also included, but the *ororo* and *bung reth* have no representatives and take no part in the election although they are important in the ceremonies of installation. 643 666

Just as Shillukland is divided into two territorial divisions, Gerr and Lwak, so for ritual purposes this structure is represented in special ritual terms. The Northern province becomes *Gol Dhiang*, the Southern province becomes *Gol Nyikang*. There is a rough correspondence between the two political and the two ritual divisions. The chiefs of the ritual divisions are the political chiefs of Golbany and Kwom, the two settlements just north and south of Fashoda. 182 631

The election of a particular *reth* must have the backing of the whole country, although at first sight it may appear that the choice lies with the chiefs of Gol Dhiang and Gol Nyikang. The election cannot take place unless they agree and this does not involve their own personal opinions solely. The other chiefs all take part and represent the views of each section of the country and if there is disagreement between the two provinces civil war may follow. Agreement is usually reached before the electoral college sits and formally proposes and elects the new *reth*. During the interval between the death of a *reth* and the election of his successor custom requires that all potential claimants should stay in their villages. This is the chance to seize the *reth*ship by force, if a candidate wishes to do so and has the necessary backing. Co-operation between the candidate and his settlement chief is essential for only the latter has the necessary force and only a *reth*'s son is eligible for the *reth*ship. Other chiefs join the rebels and fighting will begin. Until one side is defeated, or the *nyireth* is killed there will be civil war. 631 643 666 643 669

*The Installation Ceremonies*

Skins, ostrich feathers and the various trappings for the pageantry of the ceremonies are provided traditionally by certain clans and settlements. The principal shrine of Nyikang is at Akurwa, where he is believed to have disappeared in a storm. At his shrine are kept effigies of Nyikang and his son Dak. Into these effigies the spirits of Nyikang and Dak may enter at any time. On the death of a *reth* new images are made, for it is believed that Nyikang's spirit, formerly in the *reth*, transfers itself to the new effigy and remains there during the inter-regnum. At the installation 643 778

(1) Howell and Thomson, *S.N.R.*, 1946, Vol.XXVII, p.29.

643 778 of the newly elected *reth* Nyikang and Dak are brought in procession from Akurwa to Fashoda with their priests to test the new *reth*.

182 631 643 541 The conventional opposition between northern and southern divisions now becomes apparent. The forces of the southern province flock to support the *reth*-elect and wait at Debalo settlement while Nyikang and his supporters assemble at Adodo. The two armies then march to Khor Arepajur and a mock battle takes place with millet stalks instead of spears. Nyikang captures the *reth*-elect and there is a procession to the shrine of Nyikang at Fashoda. Certain ceremonies of a mystic nature follow, which are not participated in by the whole people, as are the procession and battle. The image of Nyikang is placed on the royal stool, then the king-elect sits on it and the spirit of Nyikang is believed to enter into him, and possess him causing him to tremble.

A few days later a second mock battle occurs between the king's supporters and Nyikang. The *reth* is victorious, for Nyikang has taken possession of him and the effigy is now merely the symbol of Nyikang and no longer the repository of his spirit. . In a final ceremony all the important chiefs and elders from all parts of Shillukland declare their allegiance to the new *reth*.

182 643 The installation ceremonies of the *reth* and the traditions relating to Nyikang show how, at every point, the structure and political organisation of the Shilluk people is confirmed by ritual and by mystic symbols.

643 629 All rebellions and revolts are directed against the king in person and not against the kingship itself. The unity of the Shilluk is such that the various segments of the country can be represented by the common symbol of the *reth*-ship. Nevertheless, there are powerful tendencies towards fission within the structure. As has been shown, the kingship is the subject of competition on the part of the *nyireth* candidates supported by chiefs and forces available from their territories.

171 Of all the Nilotic groups for which there is any considerable information, the Shilluk alone form a single political unit, or nation, as opposed to a number of separate tribes or tribal groups which are culturally similar but not politically unified. At the same time the principles of their political structure and social organisation are similar in many respects to those of the rest of the Nilotes, in particular the Anuak.

AGE SETS

114 Apart from a brief mention by Hofmayr, the only information concerning the Shilluk age sets is contained in Howell's article in *Sudan Notes and Records*, 1941, Vol.XXIV.

541 887 On reaching puberty a Shilluk boy is initiated into the age-set organisation. A Shilluk age set is known as *ric* and is made up of three or more subdivisions each consisting of men of approximately the same age, who have herded cattle together as boys. A man always remains in the subdivision into which he has been initiated, but a periodical shuffling of the subdivisions alters their respective positions in an age set and the whole age-set organisation. A reorganisation of the groups of subdivisions

5:Lienhardt E-4 (no date) 1954 FJ23 Shilluk FJ23



existence. The smallest unit of Shilluk social structure is the family (*gol*) living in a homestead of one or two huts. From one to fifty or more such homesteads built together form a hamlet, the members of which keep their cattle together, and are gathered round a headman; a group of hamlets forms a settlement, of which there are about a hundred in Shilluk-land. The settlement is composed of branches of different descent groups, one of which is dominant within the settlement and forms a nucleus around which the others form themselves into a distinct community. This dominant descent group or lineage provides the leader or chief of the settlement. Settlements are politically opposed to each other, though there have been in the past loose confederations of settlements, which have been used, and sharpened in outline, for administrative purposes. The whole of Shilluk land is divided into two provinces, Ger in the north and Luak in the south. All the Shilluk recognize a common head of their whole land, the *reth*, who is here called the king; the king always comes from the royal clan, the *kwareth*, founded by the first Shilluk king, Nyikang; it is the largest clan in Shilluk land, and may have representatives in any settlement. There is now a royal capital at Fashoda. In Shilluk tradition the earliest Shilluk kings had no fixed capital, but reigned from their natal homes. Now, although the capital at Fashoda has been long established, the wives of the king are sent away from Fashoda to various parts of Shilluk land to bear their children, and the children of the king (*nyireth*) are brought up away from the capital. Only those princes whose fathers have been installed as kings of the Shilluk can themselves claim to be installed and, in theory at least, princes who are thus eligible may at any time advance their claims by killing the reigning king. Besides the royal clan, and the lineages of 'commoner' clans, known collectively as the *colo*, there is a distinct clan called *ororo*, originally a branch of the royal house, but said to have been disinherited and cut off by an early Shilluk king. Members of this clan have special duties to perform in connexion with the king, but do not have royal status. In addition, there are the *bang reth*, servants of the king, composed of wives of previous kings, descendants of personal attendants of the king, people possessed by the spirit of Nyikang or of some other king, and others who in one way or another have become retainers dependent on the royal house. From these come the guardians and priests of the shrines of Nyikang, of which there are several in various parts of Shilluk country, and the shrines and graves of other Shilluk kings. Offerings are made at these graves and shrines as part of the religious cult of Nyikang and the royal house, which is the main cult of the Shilluk, though offerings are made to their own ancestors also by the heads of the commoner lineages. Their totemic observances seem to amount to little more than not eating the totemic species, and both totemism and the cult of ancestors of commoner descent groups are said to figure less largely in Shilluk religion than the cult of Nyikang and the kings. Shilluk totemism may in fact be of Dinka origin. Besides the priests of the Nyikang cult, and operating apart from them,

5:Lienhardt E-4 (no date) 1954 FJ23 Shilluk FJ23



which is now not exercised, to take part in the election of the Shilluk king. This right comes from Nyikang, who originally married his daughter to a Nuba, and received from the Nuba an inlaid stool, a replica of which is now the 'throne' of the Shilluk.[1] Such a myth, for the Shilluk, gives the Nuba a customary place in the social order of the Shilluk world. There are other examples which show that Nyikang explains differentiation, as he explains the relationship between the differentiated parts. One illustration may be taken from a myth of Nyikang's making people from animals,[2] and another, from the nature of the territorial divisions of the Shilluk kingdom.

It is said that when Nyikang first arrived in his land with his followers, he made people for his kingdom out of insects, fish, and animals. These he captured and turned into human beings, and they are the origin of the Shilluk common people. After Nyikang had made these people from the animal creation, 'the parent stock was removed by death', so that their children might not know of their origin. So the Shilluk common people derive their humanity, and their separateness from the animal creation, from the action of Nyikang. They claim, however, that their totems were given them by Nyikang,[3] who thus both separated them from the non-human creation, and also established an ordered relationship between some of the descent groups of his kingdom and various non-human species. According to another account, Nyikang alone was able to recognize that men were masquerading as animals and, seeing through this confusion, he captured them and made them into the men they really were.[4] This story shows Nyikang able to distinguish between appearance and reality, and to assimilate the reality to his kingdom.

### *Partition of the Shilluk kingdom by Nyikang*

The clearest example of Nyikang's position in Shilluk cosmology—that is, their apprehension of the differentiation and the correlation of the parts of their world—is to be found in the territorial partition of the Shilluk kingdom, and this is here described at some length. Nyikang is thought to have entered present Shilluk country in the south-west, near Tonga, and to have moved along the west bank of the river until he established the northern limits of his country near Muomo, founding villages on the way, and associating them with his followers, his clients, or himself. The dominant lineages of various Shilluk settlements thus owe their association with the land in which they live to Nyikang. Westermann says that the Shilluk themselves think of their land as a whole by referring to Tonga and Muomo, its most northerly and southerly settlements, which term 'corresponds exactly to the expression of the ancient Hebrews: from Dan unto Bersheba'.[5] Shilluk country is now divided into two provinces, Ger, or Gerr, in the north and

[1] Hofmayr, 1925, p. 31.
[2] Westermann, 1912, p. 156; Oyler, 1918, pp. 111, 112.
[3] Hofmayr, op. cit., p. 235.
[4] Oyler, 1918 (i), p. 111.
[5] Westermann, op. cit., Introduction, xx.

5:Lienhardt E-4 (no date) 1954 FJ23 Shilluk FJ23



631 793 Luak in the south, which, in some situations, are politically opposed to each other. These territorial and political divisions are associated, but not coterminous, with two religious divisions which Howell and Thomson call 'sees'.[1] One of these is called Gol Dhiang, and corresponds to the province of Ger and northern Shilluk-land. The other is called Gol Nyikang, and corresponds to Luak and southern Shilluk-land, which Nyikang first settled. These two religious divisions are separated by a stream or inlet of the river, 182 173 the ceremonial crossing of which by the king-elect forms part of the ceremonies at his installation. The theme of crossing the river, already referred to, is thus repeated in the installation ceremonies for the Shilluk kings, and we find elsewhere how important in Shilluk thought is the crossing from one bank to another. There is, for example, a riddle, the ideas contained in which must seem curious to those for whom the separation of the banks of a river does not have such imaginative value. The riddle asks 'What is a big man, who knows only one bank?' and the answer is 'an island'. Hofmayr explains that an island, unlike the river or the stream, has only one bank.[2] There can thus be no crossing from bank to bank.

631 616 Ger and Luak each comprise a number of districts, which are the loose confederacies already mentioned, and seem to have been much modified by Turkish and British rule. It is clear, however, that in the past the really important divisions of Shilluk-land were the religious moieties, Gol Dhiang and Gol Nyikang, and that the boundary between them was the inlet of the river, called Arepejur, which is said to mean 'the gathering of the peoples'. Each of these moieties was divided into settlements. Of these settlements, some of which have given their names to the administrative districts to which they now belong, four were of special traditional importance. These were Muomo and Tonga, guarding the northern and southern marches, and the two settlements divided by the stream Arepejur and facing each other across the boundary between the moieties. The leaders of these latter settlements represented their whole moieties in the election of the Shilluk king, so that in this situation the leader of one settlement was also the leader of Gol Nyikang, and the leader of the other was also the leader of Gol Dhiang.[3] Just north of the boundary between Gol Nyikang and Gol Dhiang, and therefore technically in the northern moiety Gol Dhiang, is the present royal capital, Fashoda. The king's clan seems to be well represented on both sides of the boundary between these moieties.

In describing the Shilluk divisions of their country, it is easy to introduce the notion of an administrative system, with an element of superordination and subordination in the relations between the larger territorial units and

[1] Howell, and Thomson, 1946, p. 75.

[2] Hofmayr, 1925, p. 402.

[3] The history of the boundary between northern and southern Shilluk-land has been very confused. The details of this confusion do not affect Shilluk cosmology. Some of the information here given is from Pumphrey, 1941, but the main analysis of the significance of the religious moieties is taken from the way they functioned at the installation of the King Anei Kur, recorded by Howell and Thomson, 1946, and from the analysis given in Evans-Pritchard, 1948.

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the smaller units which they comprise. Such a logical model would be misleading for the interpretation of the significance of the moieties, Gol Nyikang and Gol Dhiang. These seem to function primarily, if not exclusively, in the election of the Shilluk kings, successors to Nyikang. In the election of 1943–4, of which we have a full description,[1] the two leaders of the religious moieties had first to reach agreement upon the successor of the dead king, and their choice was confirmed by a representative of the king's clan, which is not identified with either moiety. An electoral college, representing various settlements of Shilluk-land, then confirmed the choice, which, according to Shilluk custom, had to be one of the princes whose father had already been king. In this case the choice was very limited, and the electoral college at once accepted the proposal made by the leaders of Gol Nyikang and Gol Dhiang. Disagreement between these over the choice of the king is said to have led to fighting between the moieties in the past, and thus to civil war in Shilluk-land.

The division of the kingdom into Gol Dhiang and Gol Nyikang thus becomes effective at the election of the king, and the preliminaries to the installation of the new king do indeed create the division which Nyikang, the king's ancestor, is said to have created in the past.[2] When the leaders of the moieties have reached agreement, there is still a ceremonial opposition between them until the king has actually been installed, when the moieties are again put together in a single kingdom, the kingdom which Nyikang originally united under himself. The Shilluk kings conceive their country as a unity by dividing it into moieties, which separate and then unite, over the election of the king. The theme of the resolution of duality and separateness, perhaps an idea paralleled by that of crossing from one bank to another of the river, in order to make a unity consciously recognized by the Shilluk, may also be seen in other features of the installation ceremonies of 1943. The Shilluk king must be possessed by, or identified with, Nyikang, so that some writers say that he 'incarnates' Nyikang. At the installation ceremonies an effigy of Nyikang is brought from northern Shilluk-land, where Nyikang is said to have disappeared during a dance.[3] There is a mock fight between this effigy, accompanied by the effigies of Dak and Cal, and the king-elect. In this fight the king first retreats from the effigy, is then captured by it, and finally must seize from it a small girl, who plays an important part in the ceremonies. She appears to represent the wife of the king's office and, since the king is to take the place of Nyikang, who represents that office, he must also take the wife. Hostility between the king-

[1] The election may have been considerably modified by European and earlier rule, and the element of election by vote may have been stressed at the expense of a rather different principle, described below (p. 157).

[2] Howell and Thomson, 1946, p. 30. Pumphrey (1941) quotes a story in which the existence of Gol Dhiang, which may well be of later foundation than Gol Nyikang, is attributed to a later Shilluk king, but it is still a king who made it. This seems to refer to an earlier stage in the evolution of the kingship. Here we speak of the kingdom as it was at the election of 1943.

[3] Hofmayr, 1925, p. 45.

5:Lienhardt E-4 (no date) 1954 FJ23 Shilluk FJ23



elect and the effigy of Nyikang then ceases, and the effigies are returned to their shrines and the king is installed. Thus, in order that the king-elect of the Shilluk shall be understood to have become one with Nyikang, separation and opposition between him and the effigy of Nyikang are created and resolved after fighting in mock battle. This resolution of the separateness of the king-elect and Nyikang is also a unification of the moieties of the Shilluk kingdom for, in the mock fighting, Gol Nyikang supports the king-elect, while Gol Dhiang supports the effigy of Nyikang. Here again Nyikang and the Shilluk king may be seen to represent the principle by which the whole Shilluk kingdom is differentiated into parts, and by which these parts are again comprehended in a whole. In the installation of the new king the unity and integrity of the Shilluk kingdom under Nyikang and the king are stressed at the same time as the *necessary* nature of its parts. The uniting of the parts is not then a function of their subordination to a larger national whole, to which their rights to separate existence are surrendered.[1] It is a function of the acceptance by all of Nyikang and the king, through whom are understood the notions of unity in diversity, which have here been briefly discussed.

### *The Concept of Juok (God)*

There is a Shilluk proverb which says that 'the Shilluk customs come from Nyikang',[2] and I have preferred to suggest something of the general significance of Nyikang, rather than to exemplify in detail all the customs which the Shilluk say are derived from him. For, in saying that their customs derive from Nyikang, the Shilluk are speaking both of an original and supposedly historical king, and of complex notions of order and permanence which form what we should have to call a metaphysical system. When the Shilluk make an ideal correlation, whether of parts of the body social, or parts of Shilluk-land, or parts of the natural physical ambient, they introduce the concept of Nyikang. By reference to him they make the most inclusive summary of the detailed order of their world and grasp that order in a single term.

Nyikang is necessary for the Shilluk understanding of their social and spatial categories, but he does not explain his own existence, nor the grounds for the reality which, for the Shilluk, he ordered in the categories by which they comprehend it. The nature of that reality is understood through the notion of *juok*, God, to which I now turn. It has already been said that the Shilluk explain the superiority and dominance of foreigners by a preference shown them by *juok*. In Shilluk story it is *juok*, not Nyikang, who created the world, and *juok* is the being who maintains it and informs it in its entirety. We have so far considered, in the Shilluk understanding of Nyikang, a notion by which a wide range of phenomena are comprehended in their interrelations and explained; to that extent we have

[1] In contradistinction to some European theories of the nation-state.
[2] Hofmayr, 1925, p. 376.

## Some Observations of a Fieldtrip among the Shilluk

Mohamed Riad

The Shilluk occupy a country that extends from 10°45' N. to 9°15' latitude. Particularly the west bank of the WHITE NILE from about 50 kilometers north of Kaka to approximately 50 kilometers east of Lake No. There is also a Shilluk pocket within Northern Dinkaland. Thus they occupy the right bank of the White Nile from near Kodok to the confluence of the Sobat. They also extend some 60 kilometers up the Sobat river, mainly on its northern bank.

The Shilluk settlements, if they can be called villages, are situated from about half a kilometer to a kilometer off the river bank giving the impression of beads hung on a string(1). Also, on the banks of the khors i.e. seasonal streams which discharge into the Nile, rising from the west or east and sloping toward the Nile, Shilluk settlements are to be found. The breadth of the Shilluk land does not exceed a five hour march from the banks of the river(2) and there is a no-man's land which stretches back to the west till the Nuba-hills. This is used as a dry season (winter) grazing land by both Shilluk and nomad Baggara Arabs, but the Shilluk do not, as a rule, pasture their cattle so far to the west. This area is quite well-known only in those areas where roads go up from the river banks to the Nuba mountains. The hydrology of this area is not known although some khors intersect it with courses estimated as parallel to the Nile and joining other khors to discharge seasonal waters into the Nile north of Kaka.

The Nile is the main waterway in the Shilluk land and because the Shilluk have a comparatively long water front they are the most skilled fishermen of the Nilotic group. The most important khor is one called Collo which takes its waters from the Nile, or more precisely from the bank-swamps against Malakal and runs parallel to the Nile separated from it only by a stretch of comparatively high bank, one to three kilometers broad, and then discharges again in the Nile south of Kodok. Again there is another khor called khor Arepejar which rises from the west and discharges into the Collo. (3) This khor is of almost no hydrological importance, but of a great significance in the realm of Shilluk cosmology and spiritual thinking. This khor is the boundary between the two religious provinces into which Shillukland is divided. On its banks one of the important rites of king installation takes place.

The Shilluk country is more or less a flat land covered with Savannah grass and with occasional clusters of trees, mainly along river and khor banks. The most famous tree is the Dolob( Borrassus aethiopum) which grows in beautiful groves on the Nile banks. The rainy season begins in May but occasional showers heralding the rains occur at the end of March and early April. The dry season begins near the end of October. Rainfall is heaviest in the south. Here is the mean annual rainfall at our stations:-

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Fangak | (9°3'N) | 1187 mm |
| Malakal | (9°32') | 737 mm |
| Kodok | (9°55') | 682 mm |
| Renk | (11°45') | 506 mm |

8:Howell E-4,5 (1937, 1948) 1953 FJ23 Shilluk FJ23



in the courts are of a kind which in the past were mere matters of convention and usage and could not be defined as law even in the most extended definition of that term. The tendency is for the most intimate personal relationships to be governed by legal processes. This is a feature of the Nilotic world under the influence of modern administration which, while present among the Shilluk, is even more marked among Nuer and Dinka. There is a danger in this, because intervention in almost every sphere of human activity may tend to inhibit the normal readjustments which might otherwise naturally emerge to meet changing conditions. It is therefore all the more necessary to record something of present practice for comparison in later years.

The vast majority of cases which appear before the courts concern kinship obligations, marital relationships and the violation of rights in women. This article is therefore largely a description of the normal processes of marriage: the payment and distribution of bridewealth, divorce, and the infringement of legal rights in women. It is also in the nature of a commentary on previous articles published by Mr. M. E. C. Pumphrey and myself[1] on the subject of kinship and social organization among the Shilluk. From time to time reference is made to Nuer and Dinka institutions by way of comparison.[2] A few examples of actual disputes as heard and recorded in the Shilluk Courts are given in the text.

## Shilluk Social Structure

Shilluk society is divided into 'provinces', 'divisions' (*lak*), and 'settlements' (*podh*). These are territorial and political segments, but it is really only the settlement which has any permanent political significance. Each settlement has a common territory, the boundaries of which run at approximately right angles to the river. Such territory includes a section of the highland ridge which runs roughly parallel to the Nile and on which the permanent dwelling-houses and cattle-byres are built; a section of the river front (*toic*) which provides green grazing for the cattle when the river drops, and finally a more extensive section of the hinterland (*wak*) which is subjected to varying degrees of rain-flooding during the wet season but is dry and waterless for the rest of the year. Each type of land is essential for pastoral and agricultural activities according to the season, and the territorial segmentation of Shilluk country could not be arranged otherwise.

A settlement is an economic, political, and social unit, but is not a kinship unit since it contains representative lineages of several of the many Shilluk clans. Within the settlement there is, however, a tendency—not always effective for purely topographical reasons—for each lineage to occupy its own 'village'. Each village (*pac*) is made up of a number of 'hamlets' (also *pac*: pl. *myer*) which comprise several domestic units (*gol*), each such unit consisting of a group of dwelling-huts (*ot*) occupied by a man, his wives, and children. The village is therefore also a kinship unit and, as a general rule, the closer the territorial proximity, the closer the kinship relationship. Clans (described by giving the name of the founder with the suffix *kwa*, meaning 'descendants of') are patrilineal descent groups which are theoretically exogamous, though separation in space, coupled with considerable distance of relationship within the kinship structure, may allow modifications of this rule. The

[1] *Sudan Notes and Records*, vol. xxiv, 1941.

[2] The reader may consult the works of Professor Evans-Pritchard on the Nuer. The Dinka are less well documented.

9:Howell E-5 (1937-1950) 1952 FJ23 Shilluk FJ23



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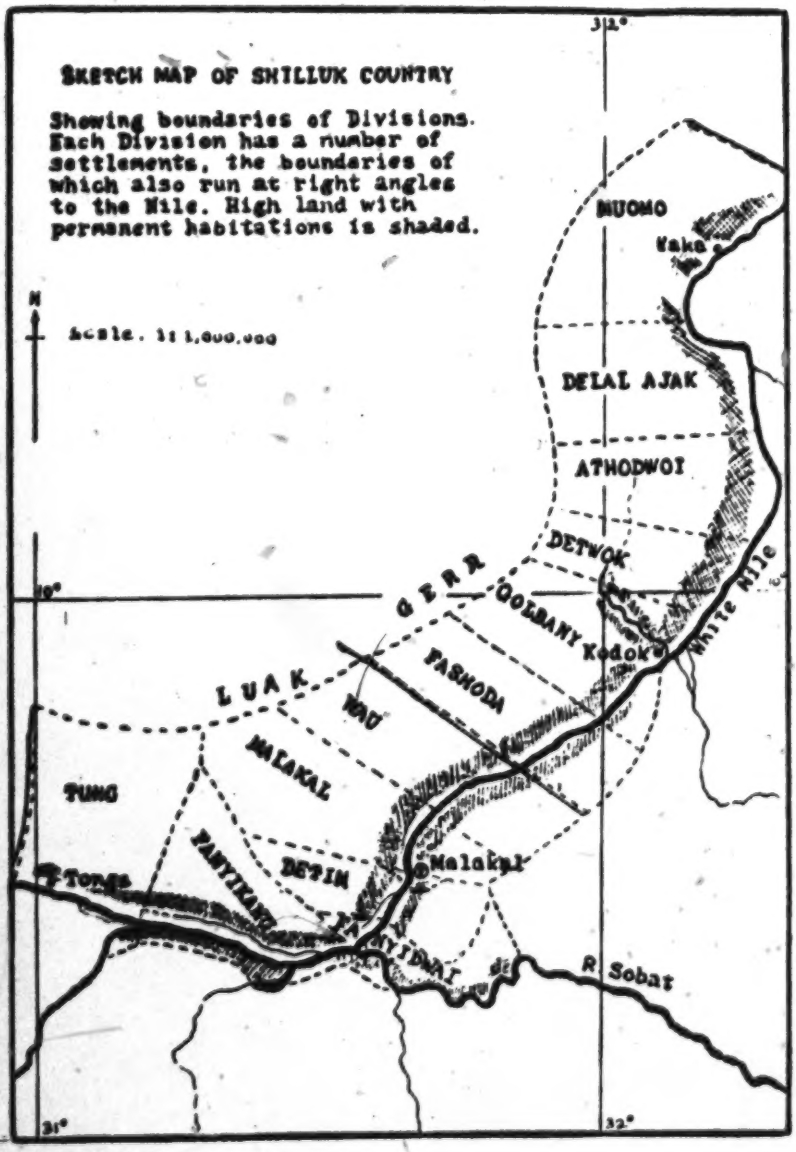

9:Howell E-5 (1937-1950) 1952 FJ23 Shilluk FJ23



that the most definite contrasts may be found. Whether this established and institutionalised monarchy is the result of diffusion from elsewhere, a legacy from ancient Egypt,[1] or the result of spontaneous development from the politico-religious functionaries who exist in embryo form among other Shilluk-speaking[2] and, indeed, other Nilotic peoples, is a controversial subject which I do not propose to discuss here.

Territorially, Shilluk country is divided into two provinces, within which are the northern and southern provinces of Muomo and Tung, eleven divisions, and finally each division into a number of settlements which are referred to as *padh*.[3] The settlement is the largest political unit which has a permanent and stable function in Shilluk society today.[4] The members occupy a common and clearly defined territory, have a common grazing and fishing area held collectively, a common name, and a common system of age-set nomenclature.[5] Within each settlement are a number of villages or hamlets, each of which, with its offshoots, is occupied by a distinct kinship group, the local lineage of one of the main Shilluk clans. One of these lineages is usually dominant and, though it does not give its name to the settlement, its leader is generally recognized as holding some authority over the rest of the community. In each settlement there are also usually representative lineages of *kwareth* who sometimes, but not always, have assumed a position of dominance within that settlement, usually by force of numbers. There are also *bang reth* living in close association with *kwareth* or tending one or more of the numerous royal shrines.[6]

There are frequent movements and migrations, both of individuals and of small domestic groups. The persons who thus take up residence in other parts of the country retain links with kinsmen in their original home and these links continue for a period. The number of generations which pass before they are forgotten is indeterminate and variable, but the factor of territorial association is an important one. Lineages of one clan living in one area are likely to retain these links and remain bound by rules of exogamy however far removed they may be in the kinship structure. Moreover, common residence in one village area or even one settlement may create bonds which are equal in strength to kinship ties and may even carry with it a bar to intermarriage. In such circumstances there is usually the fiction of common descent through the female line. Among the Shilluk there is a bar to marriage with close relatives on the maternal side carried to three or four generations, but common residence sometimes creates a more permanent prohibition.

[1] See Seligman, C. G., *Egypt and Negro Africa*. George Routledge & Sons, 1934, p. 60.

[2] For example, the Anuak nobles; see Evans-Pritchard, *The Political System of the Anuak of the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan*, Monographs on Social Anthropology, London School of Economics, 1940; and Driberg, J. H., *The Lango*.

[3] *padh*. A more elastic and relative term than I had realised when writing an article on this subject in 1937. *padh* simply means 'home' or 'homeland' and Shilluk refer to *padh reth*: 'Shillukland'. The word itself has the same relativity as the Nuer word *cieng* and the Dinka word *wut*.

[4] There have, of course, been changes of boundaries and processes of fission and fusion characteristic of any segmentary society. The nature of the terrain in Shilluk country, however, precludes any great change. The limitations of high ground, with clear-cut watercourses as boundaries, together with associated economic interests, tend to stabilize communities.

[5] This is a significant fact and one which throws much light on the true nature of the Shilluk *padh*. When we compare other Nilotic tribes we find that age-set nomenclature is common to whole tribes, but does not extend beyond tribal boundaries (Nuer) or, like the Shilluk, is limited to smaller segments of society (Ngork Dinka).

[6] Lineages of the *kwareth* are referred to by the name of the *reth*, *nyireth* (son of a *reth*), or *nyinyireth* (grandson of a *reth*) who founded them. Thus *kwareth* Fadiet, *kwanyoreth* Adung, &c. Similarly, *bang reth* are distinguished as *bang reth* Fadiet, *bang nyireth* Adung, &c.

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is in accordance with Shilluk tradition, but the kings prior to this period appear to have had a stability of tenure unknown during the latter half of the nineteenth century.[1] The opposition sprang from resentment of an excessive and often oppressive use of the powers accorded to him and also from a reaction to the interference of an alien government, for many of the *reths* of that period were no more than puppets. *reth* Kwathker, who was the *reth* of the Shilluk at the time of the first arrival of the Turkish 'Mudir' at Fashoda, was deposed and replaced by a nominee called Ajang Nyidhok, who was never accepted by the southern Shilluk.[2] A civil war between the north and the Government on one side supporting Ajang, and the south supporting Kwathker followed. The south was defeated, and Kwathker died in chains at Fashoda.[3] Ajang was himself deposed shortly afterwards and the Turks attempted to administer the Shilluk without a *reth* at all. This policy was, however, entirely unsuccessful and, after a clash which resulted in a massacre of Government troops at Kaka in 1875, Kweikon, son of Kwathker, was installed as *reth*. A few years later Kweikon joined the Turkish troops in their attack on the forces of the Mahdi at Jebel Gadir. The Turkish and Shilluk forces were annihilated and Kweikon was killed. Subsequently, after a period of interregnum, Yor, son of *reth* Akoc, who had visited the Mahdi and received his support, installed himself at Fashoda. The support of the *Mahdia*, however, did not continue under the régime of the Khalifa Abdullahi, and Yor was finally captured and beheaded by the Emir Zeki Tumal near Tonga. His successor was Kur, another son of *reth* Nyidhok, who was a Mahdist puppet and called by them Abdel Fadil. During Kur's absence in Omdurman, Akol, a son of Kwathker, supported by the southern Shilluk attempted a *coup d'état*, but was unsuccessful owing to the intervention of the northern Shilluk. The present Government arrived in 1898, and Kur remained in power until 1903, when he was deposed for 'unjust and oppressive' actions against his people. He was replaced by Fadiet, a Government nominee, who died in 1917. After a show of opposition by the southern Shilluk, who supported Coti, son of *reth* Ajang, Fafiti, son of Yor, was finally installed at Fashoda in 1917 and ruled until 1943. He was followed in quick succession by Anci wad Kur, who died less than two years after his installation, and Dak wad Fadiet, who died in 1951. The present *reth*-elect, not yet formally installed, is Kur wad Fafiti.

Throughout this period, administration was carried out through the agency of the *reth*, although there were frequent attempts to increase the authority of local chiefs, formed into Chiefs' Courts. It may be noted also that there were occasional attempts to oust Fafiti in favour of rivals, the most notable of whom was Nyawelo wad Kur who was exiled in 1932. These attempts were, however, severely suppressed by the Government and it is impossible even to guess whether they would have been successful, if the reigning *reth* had not enjoyed an artificial stability of tenure provided by the Government. During this period the policy of the Government was to establish tribunals throughout the country from which final appeal lay to the *reth* himself. The extent of the jurisdiction of these tribunals has varied considerably from time to time, the boundaries being altered, for administrative convenience, to approximate to the

[1] See Hofmayr, *Die Schilluk*, 1925, and also Westermann, *The Shilluk People*, 1912, on traditions about the early *reths*.

[2] Howell and Thomson, op. cit., p. 75, i.e. those living in Lusk. The division into Lusk and Gerr has had not only ritual but political significance.

[3] Kodok—Turkish Province Headquarters and called by them Fashoda. Fashoda is in fact the capital of the *reth* and lies some fifteen miles south of Kodok.

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traditional divisions of Shilluk country. From the early years of administration, with frequent minor adjustments, until 1949 these divisions were eleven in number,[1] but they were recently amalgamated to form five.

These historical factors have been summarized here to show how difficult it is to formulate definite conclusions on the *reth*'s political authority. According to tradition and to what the Shilluk will often themselves say, he has absolute powers of intervention to suppress public disturbances, to give judgement in certain disputes and, moreover, to execute those judgements. In fact, in recent years, and possibly at times during the latter half of the nineteenth century, this theoretical authority has had the backing of an alien government and may for this reason have been exaggerated beyond what was actually enforceable in earlier times. There is, therefore, throughout Shilluk history in the last hundred years a divergence of theory and fact, and one does not know how much of the theory has been created by external influences. It will be realized that this problem is also of some importance in a theoretical study of primitive legal systems, for we wish to know whether the laws were, in fact, enforceable, whether the Shilluk monarchy, apart from external influences, represents 'politically organized society', and whether certain laws were enforced and legal sanctions applied in such a manner as to justify the use of the term 'public law'.

There is little evidence of legal procedures during the Turkish régime and none during the *Mahdia*. Schweinfurth writing, in 1868, a lucid account of a Shilluk dispute heard by the Turkish 'Mudir' or Governor at Fashoda, says: 'He (the Mudir) was continually being called upon to adjust the disputes of natives, who appealed to his judgement even in their most private concerns. . . .' After describing the unsuccessful plea of a Shilluk girl for permission to marry her lover who had not enough cattle to pay the bridewealth, he adds, 'This was not a very comforting decision, but it showed me plainly how that it was ever his rule to recognize the customs of the country'.[2] Schweinfurth also gives a vivid picture of the Shilluk king at this period.

> In the Mudir's verandah I also made acquaintance with a Shillook chief, who had entirely surrendered to the Egyptian Government, and was now, as the Governor expressed himself, 'coming to his senses.' There was no external indication whatever of his rank. . . . He retained now but a shadow of his former power; his better days were gone, days in which, attended by a council of ancestral state, he had swayed the sceptre of patriarchal dignity. Of all the negro races which occupy the entire district of the Nile, the Shillooks used to uphold the most perfectly regulated government. . . . But now this condition is all changed, and everything has disappeared which gave this independent and primitive people their most striking characteristics.[3]

There are, of course, other references to the indigenous administration of the Shilluk based on the division of the country into provinces and settlements with a representative of the *reth* in charge of each, and the *reth* himself as the ultimate authority. Many writers therefore assume that there existed a highly organized system; more highly organized than the evidence warrants. It is natural that the present

[1] See Howell and Thomson, op. cit., p. 6.

[2] Schweinfurth, G., *The Heart of Africa*, London, 1878.

[3] Schweinfurth, op. cit., p. 19. He is here referring to the Turkish puppet Ajang wad Nyidhok. He mentions later that 'Kasgar' (presumably Kwathker), another descendant of the ancient reigning family, still maintained himself as an 'uncontrolled sovereign' in the southern part of the Shilluk country.

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Government, with periodic modifications, has utilized existing divisions of the country as administrative units, and has drawn its agents from the dominant lineages of each, thus creating a hierarchy of chiefs responsible to the *reth* himself; but this is not necessarily evidence that such a system was a reality in the past. On this subject Pumphrey expresses the opinion that, 'The power of the *Reths* before the Turkish interference was undoubtedly great. It was based partly on the semi-divinity with which tribal tradition clothes them and partly upon their great wealth in cattle and slaves. Justice was probably rough and large-scale fighting more prevalent than litigation, such law-suits as there were being seen, as previously mentioned, either by the settlement chief or by the *Reth* at Fashoda.' He adds in a footnote that 'The *Reth* is said to have had the enviable privilege of killing a tiresome litigant with a club.'[1] In an unpublished record Pumphrey goes farther than this and says:

I do not think it is true to say that as far back as Shilluk tradition goes, there is a system of administration and Courts with the *reth* at the head of it and powers descending through the heads of provinces, whom we call Court Chiefs, to heads of sections down to the village headman. . . . Naturally as one Chief or another attained to local prestige, he would tend to attract cases to him, and certainly for a period the princesses of Dettim used to see local cases. There were, however, only four regular offices under the *reth*. The Chiefs of Luak and Gerr lived on either side of Fashoda and were his right-hand men. The Chiefs of Muomo and Tonga were chiefs of the marches whose definite job it was to keep a look out for invading enemies. Apart from this, however, the Chiefs of the marches were also the *reth*'s representatives in the two extremes of the country and used both to see cases themselves and send along to Fashoda those cases which they thought the *reth* should see. Beneath these four officials were the Chiefs (*jyak*) i.e. holders of the *law*.[2] Our present 'Section Chiefs' are only *some* of them *law* holders, for the reason that 'sections' (occasionally somewhat arbitrarily formed) contain usually several original villages and each village has a *law* (by an 'original village' I mean the parent village of a group of off shoots of villages). It was through these *jyak* and through these four senior officials that the Shilluk country used to be ruled. The *reth* did not tour much, but had the people sent to him at Fashoda. If a killing occurred, the offending lineage would have to produce a girl and a boy. The girl would be handed to the brother (or near relative) of the dead man and the boy would go to be slave to the *reth*. If the case was not settled, or if one village went to fight with another one without sufficient cause, the *reth* would send his army (*tiek*) to take all the cattle from the offending village, or, if necessary burn their villages. This army would consist of one or more of the adjacent villages, its strength depending on the amount of potential resistance. Any number of sections could be raised and it seems that the sections so instructed were glad to go, since the *reth*'s army was seldom, if ever, opposed and consequently there was little bloodshed, but a certain amount of booty.[3]

Pumphrey's opinions may seem somewhat contradictory, but it is clear that he thinks there was no highly efficient State system with an all-powerful *reth* at the head.

Evans-Pritchard points out that:

it is unlikely that the so-called 'provinces' were in fact more than districts or that they were in any sense administrative departments before they were made into something of the kind by foreign governments. Moreover, though doubtless the king exercised considerable influence in the country and may have confirmed settlement chiefs in office, he did not

[1] Pumphrey, op. cit., p. 19.
[2] *law*, robe of office given by the *reth*.
[3] Pumphrey: Unpublished records. Undated: *circa* 1936.

9:Howell E-5 (1937-1950) 1952 FJ23 Shilluk FJ23



nominate them. They were heads of settlements in virtue of their position as heads of lineages dominant in those settlements and although they had certain duties to the king it is, I think, wrong to describe them as being in any sense administrative officials. To use such terms as 'state', 'government', and 'administration' in speaking of the Shilluk political system would appear to me, in the light of what is now known of it, to be a mistake.[1]

My own opinion is in accordance with these views. At any rate, if such terms are used, it should be made clear that they are qualified by the considerations already mentioned. In comparison with modern conceptions of an organized State system, or with such highly developed political institutions as are found in some African kingdoms, such as that of the Baganda, the Shilluk system cannot be said to have reached, without external influences, a high degree of rigidity or efficiency. When compared, however, with the acephalous systems of their Nuer and Dinka neighbours, it is apparent that the Shilluk had, even in early times, advanced much farther along the road towards 'politically organized society'.

## Homicide and Blood-feuds: The *Reth*'s Rôle as Peacemaker

A study of the laws of homicide is likely to reveal, not only the nature of the legal system and whether or not a system of public law was in existence in the past, but also whether such law was in fact enforced by the *reth* or his representatives. In an acephalous society like that of the Nuer, and probably among the Dinka as well, we know that homicide was, until the advent of the present Government, treated purely as a private delict subject to retaliatory or restitutive sanctions. Thus an act of homicide would instantly lead to a blood-feud between the two segments of society concerned. A feud could be composed either by retaliation against the person of the killer or one of his kinsmen—which might lead to yet further hostilities—or by payment of an indemnity in cattle equivalent to the life of a man, to restore the equilibrium. We know too that a special functionary existed, the *kwar kwar* or 'leopard-skin chief' of the Nuer and the *bany de ring* or 'Chief of the Spear' of the Dinka. These experts were invited by the participants to intervene and mediate between them and to supervise both the secular and ritual processes of composition and peacemaking according to accepted and conventional patterns. In no sense did they have the authority to impose their demands for peace on the people or forcefully to intervene between them. They were called upon to do so only when the will to come to terms was already there, largely determined by expediency.

We know that among the Shilluk acts of homicide were followed by feuds, often more bloody and lasting than any likely to occur among the Dinka and Nuer. We know too that blood-feuds could be composed by the payment of compensation and the performance of the ritual which accompanies such payments. But here there is a difference. While in Dinka and Nuer society there were many recognized hereditary mediators, among the Shilluk there was only one, the *reth* himself. The functions of the *reth* in the processes of peacemaking are therefore relevant. Was he, like the *kwar kwar* and the *bany de ring*, simply a mediator and ritual expert competent to conduct the negotiations only on the demand of the people themselves, or was he able to intervene between them with an independent and neutral force behind him? In collecting the accepted indemnity, did he hand it over to the injured party as compensa-

[1] Evans-Pritchard, op. cit., p. 14.

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described as feuds, for they amount to civil war; the latter are usually so quickly composed that the feud is soon over. The ultimate aim of the first is successful deposition of the monarch by one side or his retention by the other, and there is evidence of a traditional, almost institutionalized, opposition between the north and south.[1] In the latter form of hostilities the desire for peaceful composition after an outbreak of violence or an act of homicide was presumably fostered by expediency, for within so compact and densely populated a territorial unit the continuance of a feud would be intolerable.[2] Local lineages within a settlement are sufficiently united by common interests in economic activities, by marital ties, and above all in common defence against aggression from other settlements, that these sanctions were, and indeed still are, particularly effective. These distinctions are important, for not only are feuds between adjacent settlements often fiercely sustained, as we have seen, but it is at this level of internal disruption that the intervention of the *reth* is most obvious, if we are to accept the evidence of recorded instances. This is true whether we take the view that in the past, before Government influences were effective, the king's intervention took the form of arbitration demanded by the participants, or whether we take the opposite view that he took repressive or even legal action as the head of an organized State.

In the case of civil war over the tenure of the monarchy itself, the *reth* was the leading participant defending his personal position against a rival. Action against him was *ultra vires*, though this was no longer true as soon as his rival was established on the throne. In the case of hostilities within a settlement, the sanctions were probably sufficiently forceful to secure amicable composition without either external arbitration or repression. We must, therefore, consider homicide in the context of inter-settlement feuds in which, as we shall see, the *reth* was more particularly involved in the rôle of peacemaker. It will then be necessary to consider the more individual aspects of the laws of homicide.

### *The* Reth*'s Rôle in the Composition of Inter-settlement Feuds*

On this subject the Seligmans say:

> As the fountain of justice, the king kept for himself by far the greater part of the fines for homicide and other grave offences. The fine for man-killing was usually ten head of cattle, but sometimes more was levied; a girl might be taken in lieu of the cattle, when the king would allow the girl to marry, but would keep the bridewealth; or a girl and a boy might be kept as hostages by the king until the cattle were paid. The king might give one head of cattle to the family of the deceased as compensation; this, however, did not always settle the matter, and a blood feud might start and be continued until the balance of dead was even, often not only families but whole villages becoming involved.[3]

the Ngork Dinka at any rate are in this respect closer to the Shilluk than to the Nuer.

[1] See Evans-Pritchard, op. cit., p. 29.

[2] Latent hostility between kinship groups *within* a settlement sometimes prevailed. I recently drove with the *jago* of Ogod *Par* from his home in the extreme south of that settlement to his northern boundaries. He insisted that I should drive him back, presumably because he preferred the comfort of a motor-car to his own feet, but he gave as a reason that his people were at feud with the *kwa* Oman lineage lying just to the north of his own village (an act of homicide had occurred two years before). It may be noted, however, that the villages of these *kwa* Oman are set in Ogod *Butu* which is, in a sense, a separate settlement territorially but not politically within the boundaries of Ogod *Par*. It is doubtful whether a feud between these people would be long sustained.

[3] *Pagan Tribes of the Nilotic Sudan*, p. 46. The authors make no reference to the evidence from which these deductions were made. It must be remembered that Seligman supported the view that the king had absolute power. 'In the old days his word was law....' *The Cult of Nyakang and the Divine Kings of the Shilluk*, Welcome Report, 1911.

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628 643 led by the guard, and then motored on to Owaci who were similarly started off, about eight hundred strong, also in four companies.

There was a large assembly uniting at the meeting place, with three bullocks and four sheep for sacrifice. These were provided by the *reth* and the two factions.

● [631] Two neutral Chiefs had previously been told off to lead the factions to the meeting place which had been marked. This is important because experience has shown[1] that left to themselves the two factions will sit down about two hundred yards apart and then the memory of stolen cattle or a murdered brother will be too much for someone's self-control resulting in a flow of martial oratory. This will lead some young blood to dash forward and hurl spears or insults and there follows retaliation. If they can be got to move up close together without pause, it is obvious that the consequences of any hostilities will be so serious that anyone trying to start anything will instantly be suppressed by his wiser brethren in arms.

Both factions were finally got to sit down close up to the line and to put their shields on the ground as a sign of mutual confidence. The *reth* walked among them and briefly addressed them and they answered that they wanted peace. He was rather an impressive figure and seemed to have the situation under confident control. Some concerted hand-clapping was taken as a good sign by the public.

The *reth*'s bullock was then led between one faction and the guard, thrown on its back, [782] held by men of both factions, speared by men of both factions and had its throat cut.[2] Next, a procession of neutrals was formed who took hand-fulls of the stomach contents and marched round throwing it at the factions. The next item caused most interest among the public. Thworo got up, marched round the guard and sat down touching Owaci who had the good manners to remain seated. Owaci's bull and sheep were led up, but put aside to be sacrificed at the shrine of Queen Abujok in Thworo next day. Thworo's bull was then led up and killed just as the *reth*'s had been by persons with an active interest in the feud. Lesser folk killed the sheep, one of which got up and managed to stagger a few steps under [787] a rain of spear thrusts. This was considered a bad omen and one by-stander recalled the abortive peace between Faalo and Fanyidwai in 1926.[3]

[648] This cannot be quoted as evidence of the *reth*'s executive powers, for we know that he was accompanied by the District Commissioner on this occasion, but certain interesting facts emerge. In the first place, the attitude of opposition between the two groups is clearly stressed, though it is more than probable that at proceedings of this kind a display of hostile attitudes is demanded by convention. The author indicates that the *reth* busies himself with the actual organization of the ceremonies and certainly acts as arbitrator, visiting first one side and then the other. It is unfortunate that little mention is made of the ritual functions of the *reth*. In 1920 the Rev. D. S. [114] Oyler described a similar peace ceremony in the settlements of Maimom, Fakoi, Fatworo, and Falo[4] and his account of the procedure does not greatly differ from that of Titherington. He implies throughout that the desire for peace came from the participants and there is no suggestion that peace was forced upon them, even though the *Mamur*[5] was present. 'The people of this District', he says 'were tired of con-

[1] Titherington makes no reference to instances from which such experience derived. It must be assumed that some peace ceremonies failed from the start.

[2] Shilluk say that each man concerned should stab the sacrificial ox, which is then split (*ŋɛl*) and the two portions divided among the respective parties. This procedure is reminiscent of all ceremonies performed in Nilotic tribes for the restoration of peaceful relations.

[3] Unpublished District records by G. W. Titherington, at Malakal, dated 3.4.32.

[4] Oyler, the Rev. D. S. 'The Shilluk Peace Ceremony', *S.N.R.*, 1920.

[5] Sudanese (or more probably Egyptian) administrative officer.

643 the ceremonial killing of the kings. Some authors have discarded this practice 19), and alluded some killing of kings to family quarrels and competition over the throne. It is true that some brothers killed each other, but this is still one of the attributes of divine kingship.

According to the information I gathered in Malakal, King Dak, who died in 1951 at the Malakal hospital, was well guarded by the police during his treatment in the hospital, and no Shilluk was allowed to visit him lest he may be killed in the same traditional way as his ancestors. 20) My informants were sorry for the natural death of Dak, but they seemed to have accepted it as they were helpless against the troops of the central government. Just how far the Shilluk nation as a whole accepted it, I could not tell.

[648]

631 The political administration of the Shilluk country and its components may be summarized as follows: 21)

a) The Hamlet:

This is the smallest political unit with a chief at its head. The hamlet is formed by a lineage group of homesteads.

b) The Settlement:

This is a group of hamlets, i.e. a group of lineages gathered into a large area. At the head is a chief, called the Jago.

c) The District:

The Shilluk country is divided into eleven districts; each district is a combination of many settlements. These districts, though said to be organized by Nyikang, are not a permanent political factor. Its importance may have been felt in exceptional periods such as warfare, or to meet a common danger. The Egyptian government, and after it the Anglo-Egyptian government, used such divisions as administrative units. The important districts from the Shilluk point of view were Nuome and Tung, that is, the northern and southern marches of the land.

[648]

d) The Provinces:

There are two provinces in the Shillukland. These are important political divisions, and their importance has been shown clearly above. The chief of Debale Kwom, and the chief of Golbany are the two chiefs of the southern and the northern provinces.

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19) "Evans-Pritchard considers that the ceremonial putting to death of kings (among the Shilluk) is probably a fiction ..." Butt, p. 54.
20) See also Howell, (2) p. 157.
21) Butt, pp. 46-48.

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e) The Capital:

This is Fashoda where the king resides, and where the highest native court of appeal is held under the presidency of the king himself. [692]

631 642 The meaning of such a political organization is quite clear. The chief of every division is not selected or appointed by the king, but elected by the group concerned, and is formally invested by a dress from the king as a symbol of his authority. The basis of the Shilluk political system is lineage or clan, and has nothing to do with blood relationship to the royal family.

173 The present Shilluk country, it is said, is only a part of what was the Shillukland before. Just how far the Shilluk expansion did reach is controversial. My informants insisted on the fact that Nyikang reached the confluence of the White and the Blue Niles, and built a village there; and he sent messengers northwards to scout the area, but these messengers returned after reaching the site of the present Wadi Halfa (22° north latitude), informing Nyikang of the poverty of the area. After receiving this report, Nyikang did not consider another expedition, and returned to Akurwa where he was last seen. This is quite clearly an exaggeration, because at that time the state of affairs in the central and northern Sudan was just beginning to take its present shape. Moreover, the Funj kingdom and the Arab state of Gerri were in their first phases of formation, i.e. politically and militarily strong enough, and on the watch against newcomers and adventurers.

174 What may have been the case is that probably the Shilluk, taking advantage of their capacity as good river-farers, descended the White Nile in their canoes.

133 Now the White Nile is an interesting water course from the geographical, geological and hydrological points of view. The life story of this river, though controversial, is an interesting one, but what concerns us here is that the river is very weak, shallow and broad, with many islands, many curves, studded with swamps on each side, full of grass vegetation, fords, an ill defined basin, and in the flood season the water inundates large stretches on both sides. Such a geographical environment provides an economically poor land, with no attraction to wealthy agricultural states. But, on the other hand, it provides a paradise for fishermen, refugees, and to a certain extent a good grazing and watering area for nomads during the dry season. Such a state of affairs is well described in the following quotation:

> "Le Bahar el Abiod (the White Nile) arrose ce territoire, & divisé, soit par l'art, soit par la nature, en un nombre considérable de petits canaux, il forme autant de petites îles, sur chacune desquelles il y a un village ... Les habitans sont tous pêcheurs, & ont des canots avec lesquels ils remontent & descendent (le fleuve) ... " 22)

22] Bruce, 440.

17: Pumphrey G-5 (1934-1938) 1941
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## CHAPTER II.
## SOCIAL STRUCTURE.

INTRODUCTION.

Unlike their neighbours the Dinka and the Nuer the Shilluk have become entirely sedentary. They have a long river frontage in proportion to the population and there is therefore no necessity for an annual migration for summer grazing. In the summer the cattle are taken across to islands and the youths accompanying them build temporary cattle camps, but in no case is a village periodically entirely deserted.

Thus the Shilluk lack what for example the Dunjol Dinka living opposite them receive, namely an annual refresher course in clan organisation. The Dunjol Dinka village organisation disintegrates in the summer and the clans to a large extent reform for summer grazing. No such periodical reformation takes place with the Shilluk and consequently the clan organisation is more masked by the growth of territorial administrative units. Had the territorial unit, superimposed by years of the sedentary habit, obliterated completely the clan-organisation the administration of the tribe would be relatively simple. But Shilluk conservatism causes them to remain profoundly clan-conscious, and if to-day after some four hundred years of the sedentary state the tribe were for some reason to revert to nomadic habits there is no doubt that the clans would instantly reform.

The territorial system has evolved as the result of the grouping together of neighbouring hamlets, largely for purposes of defence against other groups, into what will be termed "settlements."

THE CLAN (KWAR).

*Kwar* (meaning literally "descendants"), followed by the name of the ancestor in question, is the Shilluk equivalent of clan. *Kwar* Okel designates all patrilineal descendants of Okel. Often the ancestor is mythical. There may be some hundred recognised clans in the tribe. But though every one knows to which clan he belongs, and although the clan entire continues to be an exogamous unit, it has ceased to possess for practical purposes any corporate unity. It

possesses no chief as such. The clans have in fact disintegrated over the face of the country, so that not only will clan "A" be distributed over several settlements, but one settlement will contain detachments of several clans. A detachment of clan within a settlement has been termed a "lineage" by Mr. Howell and will be so termed in this note.

THE SETTLEMENT (PODH).

The word *podh* is as elastic as the English "home" or the Arabic "dar." It can describe the entire Shilluk country, a settlement or a group of settlements. Properly however it designates the settlement, which is a group of villages, containing several lineages, agglomerated for purposes of mutual defence and owing allegiance to a common chief. The settlement is the basic element in the indigenous tribal structure.

The country is divided into some hundred settlements, varying in size from Kodok which contains more than 600 adult males to others containing less than 100. Geographically they are divided by lines approximately at right angles to the river.

Each settlement contains, in microcosm, the administrative difficulties of the tribe. For the settlement, which appears at first to be a purely territorial unit, is really a collection of different lineages. These lineages, welded together by threat of war, are apt to be dissident in the present time of comparative peace and although they owe allegiance to their common chief they sometimes feel and pay more to the lineage head within the settlement. There is, in fact, in the settlement, as in the whole tribe, a conflict between the loyalties due to the territorial unit and those due to the submerged but ever existing clan.

It is said that Nyikang originally granted each settlement to a clan. The descendants of the original grantees, if they survive, are considered the owners of the soil and are termed *dyil*, to distinguish them from subsequently immigrating lineages, described as *wedh*. Naturally the lineage of the original grantees is often extinct, in which case the next senior lineage in the settlement becomes *dyil*. In theory the *dyil*

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The present status and functions of the thirteen Division Chiefs are the same. Each one presides over the court of his Division, and is responsible for the due payment of taxes and for sundry administrative affairs such as the clearing of roads. They have become an essential link in the administration and the feeling of "division-consciousness" is growing and needs to be fostered. The future effectiveness of the *Reth* depends much upon the strengthening of their position as his local representatives.

THE SETTLEMENT CHIEF.

The Settlement Chief is traditionally directly responsible to the *Reth*, since the four intervening high chiefs used to act more as his High Sheriffs than as local potentates. In addition to the execution of the *Reth's* orders the Settlement Chief has always had certain semi-religious obligations such as the building of a house or two houses at Fashoda or the maintaining of the local shrine of Nyikang. The settling of disputes within the settlement has always been his duty and the modern tendency for him to be judicially short-circuited in favour of the Division Chief should be avoided as much as possible. He can and should relieve the Division Chief of much of his work. He should attend meetings of the court at least whenever any party to a case is from his settlement. He is responsible primarily to the Division Chief for public security, taxes and road work.

The settlement chief is selected by the lineage heads of the settlement and invested by the *Reth* who himself knots the *lau* over his shoulder. Those of Tonga alone are invested by the Division Chief.

THE VILLAGE HEADMAN.

The status of the village headman (*jal dwong pac*) varies in accordance with whether he is the headman of the principal village of a lineage (*Pan dwong*), in which case he is not only a village headman but also the representative of his lineage within the settlement, or the headman of a subsidiary village in which case he is a village headman pure and simple, the senior member of a group of homesteads. Headmen of principal villages often receive a *lau*, in some cases from a *Reth* direct

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and in others from the Settlement Chief. In a few cases this *lau* (sometimes designated as *lau thin*, (minor *lau*,) to distinguish it from the *lau* of the Settlement Chief) is given neither by the *Reth* nor by the Settlement Chief but by the chief of the settlement from which this lineage migrated into their present locality. This is uncommon.

The headman of a principle village represents his lineage within the settlement. To a certain extent he is and should be made responsible for the taxes of his lineage. If he is the representative of the *dyil* lineage he will have a special status as representative of the true owners of the soil, and in this case the Settlement Chief will tend to regard him with some apprehension as the leader of a potentially rival faction.

The headman of a subsidiary village has a lowly status. He has no *lau* and is no more than the head of a family group. Many villages, especially in Luak, are very small, consisting perhaps of a single homestead so that a headman may be the only taxpayer in his village. The forming of such separate homesteads is contrary to good order and should be discouraged as far as possible. In Delal and Atodwoi Divisions the villages are on the whole very much bigger and the tribal discipline tends consequently to be better.

THE GOL LEADER.

Every married man has a homestead although it may comprise only himself and his wife. As the owner of a homestead he is a *gol* leader. As such he has little official status but, as has already been explained, he is entirely responsible for the unmarried members of his *gol* and should collect their taxes and hand them to the headman.

To recapitulate we may tabulate the political ladder as follows:—

| | |
|---|---|
| Shilluk tribe .. .. | *Reth.* |
| Luak and Ger .. .. | Chiefs of *Gol Nyikang* and *Gol Dhiang*. |
| Division (*luak*) .. .. | Division (or Court) Chief. |
| Settlement (*podh*) .. | Settlement Chief. |
| Hamlet (*pac*) .. .. | *Jal dwong pac.* |
| *Gol* .. .. .. | *Jal Gol.* |

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## APPENDIX IV.

TABLE SHOWING ARRANGEMENT OF SETTLEMENTS INTO CONFEDERACIES AT THE TIME OF THE MAHDIA AND THEIR PRESENT GROUPING INTO DIVISIONS.

| Divisions (1940) | Settlements | Assessed number of adult males. (in 1936) | Arrangement of Confederacies in the time of the Mahdia. |
|---|---|---|---|
| Muomo | Thworokit | 117 | Muomo |
| | Manam | 90 | |
| | Muomo | 243 | |
| | Aguoro | 99 | |
| | Thor | 100 | |
| | Abuor | 64 | |
| | Akurwa | 94 | |
| Delal | Nun | 139 | Delal |
| | Arumboth | 88 | |
| | Delal Ajak | 138 | |
| | Nyirudo | 88 | |
| | Arueth | 57 | |
| Atodnoi | Thuro | 197 | Athoduoi |
| | Dimoth | 66 | |
| | Athoduoi | 310 | |
| | Nyilec | 144 | Abiangyai |
| | Fanyikang | 50 | |
| | Ogod | 101 | |
| Detwok | Abiangyai | 174 | Oticogo |
| | Mal | 82 | |
| | Burbuk | 52 | |
| | Fabiu | 162 | |
| | Oticogo | 77 | |
| | Detwok | 140 | |
| | Alel | 97 | |
| | Kwocung | 73 | |
| | Acago | 77 | |
| | Ataro | 62 | |
| Golbafi | Golo | 377 | Golbafi |
| | Kodok | 550 | |
| | Lemo | 143 | |
| | Fadiang | 284 | |
| | Golbafi | 226 | |
| | Nyigir | 466 | |

OLD BOUNDARY BETWEEN GEL AND LUAR.

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Fashoda | Wadman | 170 | Kwom |
| | Aguoro | 112 | |
| | Kwom | 191 | |
| | Lul | 230 | |
| | Yofi | 173 | |
| | Thuolong | 220 | |
| | Biu | 62 | |
| | Fabur | 86 | |
| | Bol | 115 | |
| | Nyingar | 85 | |
| | Both | 65 | |

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| Divisions (1940) | Settlements | Assessed number of adult males. (in 1936) | Arrangement of Confederacies in the time of the Mahdia. |
|---|---|---|---|
| NEW BOUNDARY BETWEEN GER AND LUAR. | | | |
| Ogod | Fathau | 75 | Ogod |
| | Fadit | 108 | |
| | Wau | 243 | |
| | Ogod Pac | 140 | |
| | Ogod Butu | 176 | |
| | Ogod Famadh | 128 | |
| Malakal | Malakal Fathuoro | 189 | Malakal |
| | Malakal Acop Puot | 106 | |
| | Malakal Ocolo | 61 | |
| | Malakal Ayowangen | 72 | |
| | Wij Malakal | 92 | |
| | Malakal Thuorobuenyo | 71 | |
| | Obwa | 357 | |
| | Awarajuok | 269 | Awarajuok |
| | Athokong | 129 | |
| Dettim | Adodo | 141 | Dettim |
| | Dur | 232 | |
| | Thuoro Dettim | 196 | |
| | Owaci | 213 | |
| | Obai Abujop | 161 | Fanyidwai |
| | Obai Dego | 101 | |
| | Fakang | 214 | Fakang |
| Fanyidwai | Falo | 216 | Fanyidwai |
| | Fathuoro | 95 | |
| | Adhidhiang | 117 | |
| | Fanyidwai Pac | 107 | |
| | Faju | 267 | |
| | Abujop | 210 | |
| | Odwar | 63 | |
| Nyijok | Nyijok | 226 | non existent |
| | Nyanacan | 73 | |
| | Nagdiar | 176 | |
| Fanyikang | Agunjuok | 43 | Fanyikang |
| | Nyiyar | 128 | |
| | Fakwar | 80 | |
| | Akonare | 67 | |
| | Oduojo | 119 | |
| | Nyilual | 94 | |
| | Bur | 114 | |
| | Wilnyang | 150 | |
| | Dyel | 101 | |
| | Wuobo | 78 | |
| | Nyilwak | 279 | |
| | Dor | 97 | |
| | Odong Tugo | 100 | |
| Tonga | Dil | 96 | Nyibang |
| | Nyijwado | 124 | |
| | Dhok Alal | 117 | |
| | Yom | 355 | |
| | Atigo | 145 | Tonga (Tung) |
| | Nyibodo | 122 | |
| | Ayadhajo | 108 | |
| | Fafunjo | 104 | |

103
161
175
177
631

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103
133
631
131

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173 that Shilluk country once extended as far as Gordon's Tree which is just south of Khartoum. Whether there were Shilluk settlements permanently occupied in that area or whether this represents the furthest point to which they penetrated in raids and hunting parties is not certain.

361 The Shilluk are now a sedentary people and do not have any large scale migration in search of fresh pastures during the dry season. Their permanent villages, built on the high ground close to the Nile, are occupied all the year round, and only the youths go into the cattle camps, which are never more than a few miles from the villages. The cattle camps are mostly situated on islands and dried out watercourses which run parallel to the river.

173 Territorially the country is divided into two great provinces
631 Gerr and Luak. (Note 1) These two provinces are again divided into further divisions, the functional meaning of which is difficult to discover, but which retain according to Shilluk tradition a vague feeling of mutual co-operation in times of stress. These divisions were made by order of Nyikang. In most cases these divisions have been utilized by the Government for administrative purposes. Finally the country is divided into a large number of settlements, which are made up of
[614] many villages. Shilluk clans are not territorial in basis for distinct lineages of one clan may live in many and widely separated settlements. The largest unit exclusively occupied by a kinship group is
[621] the village or *bac*.[2]

565 The Shilluk people are divided into four main classes or groups
614 of clans.
644

(i) The Kwareth, the royal clan who trace descent from Nyikang and from whom the *reth*[3] is chosen.

(ii) The Ororo, a disinherited branch of the royal house, who do not differ from commoners except in the special functions

2. See P. P. Howell, "The Shilluk Settlement"; *S.N.R.* XXIV. 1941.
3. The word *reth* has often been translated as "king." We prefer to use the Shilluk term throughout.

For Notes see pp. 75 ff.

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182 dance at Pareth Fafiti lasted three days only, and no dance was held
766 at Fashoda at all.

[614] The duties of organizing the dance and of beating the drums fall
766 to a clan called Kwanyikir, the majority of whom live in the vicinity of Kodok. They are responsible for discipline among the dancers, and in particular for keeping unauthorized persons out of the sacred spots. About two hundred and fifty bulls were slaughtered for the occasion, fifty of which were provided by the family of Fafiti and the rest by well-wishers, who included a number of Arab merchants. The distribution of meat was arranged by Kwanyireth Kir, chief of Fadiang, who is chief of all the *kwareth*. As he is senile, blind and deaf, he was assisted by Kwanyireth Bol, chief of Lul and government court chief of the Fashoda division for the portion of Gol Nyikang.

643 The new *reth* has no special functions to perform, and it was notice-
776 able how careful he was to keep himself in the background. He never appeared in public while the dances were in progress, and though he attended on all three days he always went straight to his hut on arrival, and remained there during the day, and until he was ready to return
[644] to Fashoda. It was obvious that the proceedings concerned the late *reth* alone, and it was his son Byawelo Fafiti who acted as host.

631 We had hoped that the form in which the contingents of dancers
766 came in would throw some light on the traditional grouping of Shilluk sections and former political organization. We had been told by the *reth* that all sections in the three divisions of Fashoda, Golbainy, and Detwok would be represented, and no one else. In fact a contingent also came from the Athodwoi division from north of Detwok. As far as could be seen the size of the contingents corresponded with the poll tax lists, and from those contingents who did come, very few warriors could have been missing. In the confusion of the dance it was not easy to see how the sections grouped themselves, but we got the impression that the Golbainy division split up into what, in government terminology are called "sections," but which tribally are more like the other divisions which participated. For example the sections

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of the Detwok division came together, and so did all sections of Fashoda division, but the component sections of the Golbainy division split and formed separate contingents. It is probable that there is no deep tradition behind this, but that grouping is largely governed by what is considered a suitable size for a contingent. Lemmo is a small section and could not produce a contingent of its own, so it joined up with Kodok its larger neighbour. It is not clear whether the sections of Shilluk society have any definite traditional function to perform at the funeral wake of a *reth*. The *reth* had orginally planned that the four days of dancing should be apportioned as follows :--

1. Fashoda 2. Golbainy 3. Detwok 4. Fashoda (again).

This arrangement was carried out on the first day, and the dancing confined to Fashoda division, but Nyigir turned up and were regarded as intruders. Next morning, however, everyone else appeared, and the decision was taken to cut the dance to two days only.

The late *reth*'s mother (Note 3) was a Nuba woman from near Fungor, which is on the western boundaries of Shilluk country. Some of her relatives arrived on the second day of the ceremony. Naturally they played no significant part, but it is interesting that they should have come at all.

## Layout of the village Pareth Fafiti.

Pareth Fafiti, also called Abwogatho, "fear of death", the village which the late *reth* built for himself, (Note 4) is of medium size and of the usual Shilluk type. There are three cattle byres built round an open space, which is about 70 yards in diameter. The houses are built round the outside of this open space and five of these, in which the wives of the late *reth* reside, had been repaired and the fences round them renewed. The tomb of the late *reth* is the house where his senior wife lived, and in form is no different from any Shilluk homestead except for the eight cross bands on the fence and a stockade of withies outside, which was built after the late *reth*'s burial. This

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The electoral college, in whom rests the responsibility for electing a new *reth*, is a very conscious survival of the traditional structure of the Shilluk tribe, and we believe it to be composed of those who are the descendants of the men who were, at any rate traditionally, the lords-lieutenant of the various counties into which Nyikang divided his kingdom, with the inclusion of three representatives from the large royal clan.

Shilluk society is divided into four main classes, the Kwareth, Colo, Ororo, and Bang Reth, two of whom the Kwareth and Colo together represent by far the greater part of the tribe and together provide the electoral college. The Ororo and Bang Reth have very important ceremonial functions in the installing of the *reth*, but no say in his election. As has been explained in the introduction the Kwareth "class" are really an extended clan, they are the descendants of the royal house, and they all trace their ancestry back to a *nyireth* and through him and his father directly back to Nyikang. The Colo are the mass of the Shilluk people divided into many clans, who may trace their origin to a family ancestor who "came with Nyikang" to what is now Shilluk country, or claim to be pre-Shilluk inhabitants of the country, or some of those non-Shilluk accretions, which Nyikang collected to him as he pursued his conquests.

Nyikang settled the west bank of the White Nile, from "Tonga to-Mwomo," (the traditional boundary in the north is Moro some four miles north of the river port at Kaka, and in the south at Fafojo about ten miles upstream of Tonga). As he went he parcelled out the country among his followers, and made eleven of them chiefs[10] of the first degree, answerable to him and looking to him for their appointment and authority. When the organization became complete the lords of the marches of Tonga and Mwomo became even more important than the others by virtue of their duties in connexion with the defence of the Shilluk boundaries and their distance from Fashoda. But although these two were the most important on the executive side of

10. They were all Colo. Kwareth, who are descended from sons of *reths*, did not, of course, exist in Nyikang's day, for he was the first *reth*.

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the traditional Shilluk polity, the two nearest to Fashoda were the greatest in the land in all constitutional and ceremonial matters, and in the prestige deriving from their office. These two were the chief of Kwom, the section immediately south of Fashoda, and the chief of Golbainy a section five miles to the north.

Nyikang divided the country into two halves separated by the Khor Arepejur just south of Fashoda. All the country to the south was called Gol Nyikang, and all to the north, Gol Dhiang. The chief of Kwom was in theoretical charge of the counties of Gol Nyikang, and the chief of Golbainy of those of Gol Dhiang. How far the writ of these two viceroys ran in executive matters within their provinces is not clear. Judicially they almost certainly had no say, and in executing commands of the *reth* they may have acted as messengers of the *reth*, but can scarcely have had authority of their own. In all matters concerning the election of the *reth* the deference shown them was a feature of the various meetings.

Details of these various officers are given in Appendix I. Of the eleven Colo chiefs, a number are still in fact the chiefs of government "divisions," which correspond in most cases with Nyikang's divisions, but others, whose lineage and following have shrunk, no longer have the support to press their claim to what is still regarded by all Shilluk as their office as of right. Though tradition counts for much and ancestry as well, these sanctions alone will not support the legitimate claim of a chief unless he has an imposing number of warriors prepared to back him. The present chief of Golbainy, for instance, has impeccable ancestry and traditional backing, but his lineage is now small in numbers and his position as chief much weakened on that account and by agitation from other stronger lineages to be granted the chieftainship. Another interesting example of this tendency is that in recent years Kwareth lineages which are generally strong, are pressing to be given the chance to fill these chieftainships from their numbers, against all traditional usage. The traditional great chiefs who are now "impoverished" are always called in on ceremonial occasions, but have been superseded by government or the Shilluk themselves for everyday matters of administration.

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the Shilluk themselves for everyday matters of administration.

Apart from these eleven Colo chiefs, three members of the Kwareth are also members of the electoral college. Each *reth* appoints one of his sons to be "responsible" for the family. This son is not necessarily elected *reth*—in fact we doubt whether he ever has been—but he is of considerable importance. The three members of the electoral college are the descendants of the heads of three great lines of the Kwareth. Why these three should be chosen, to the exclusion of other Kwareth branches is not clear. We think they are the most important because the ancestor of each, from whom his claim to membership of the college depends, was the chief son of those three branches of the family nearest to the throne. The chief of Fadiang is regarded as in some ways chief of the Kwareth, and though the other two Kwareth members are venerable chamberlains, all the houses now eligible to produce candidates for the *reth*ship are descended directly from the sons of *reth* Nyakwac, the chief of whose sons was the ancestor of the chief of Fadiang.

Such, as far as we can disentangle it, is the theory of the constitution of the electoral body. In practice there were certain difficulties due, as usual to the fact that Shilluk tradition is nowhere written down and relies upon the memories of the elder men. A comparison of the government files on the elections of 1903 and 1917 shows that the lists of chiefs forming the electoral college were more or less the same as those in 1943 and the variations were mostly accounted for by deaths, absentees etc.

The first thing that happened after the passing of *reth* Fafiti was an unofficial committee on "ways and means", whose main object seemed to be to discover what ought to be done, and who ought to do it. This process went on, more or less consciously till the end of the installation ceremonies. It was a refreshing of the memories of Shilluk tradition and history. At this meeting the members of the electoral college were decided upon and summoned to Fashoda. Certain influential chiefs seemed to think it would be impossible to

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643 elect a *reth* without help from government, but in the event no difficulties arose.

643 Within a week of the passing of the *reth* the members of the electoral college had met at Fashoda, and many other influential 666 chiefs and notables had gathered there as well. An unanimous choice of Anei son of Kur, the favourite of Fafiti, was made, and there seemed to be little discussion and no opposition from outside the electoral college.[11]

• 631 Several interesting points in connexion with the actual election 643 procedure were noticeable. The electors divided into three groups, Gol Nyikang (southern Shilluk) under the chief of Kwom, Gol Dhiang 666 (northern Shilluk) under the chief of Golbainy, and the Kwareth under the chief of Fadhiang. Agreement was first reached between the chief of Kwom and the chief of Golbainy upon Anei as *reth*, and when this agreement was announced to the other electors they seem to have agreed to it without much further discussion. This is an interesting [156] fact, and one which is not in accord with normal Shilluk practice, where a man with decided opinions upon anything is seldom overawed by time or place in expressing them. The Colo chiefs seem to have lined up behind their respective leaders, the chiefs of Gol Nyikang and Gol Dhiang, and as the choice lay in the first place with Colo, the chief of Fadhiang, on behalf of the Kwareth, had nothing to add.

It was explained to us that the whole thing hinged upon agreement of the chief of Gol Nyikang and the chief of Gol Dhiang. Had they disagreed, their respective chiefs would have ranged themselves in opposing camps. What the Kwareth would have done is difficult to say. They said they would have followed the chief of Gol Dhiang, maybe because Fadhiang is part of Gol Dhiang but many, if not most Kwareth live in Gol Nyikang. On several past occasions when a 631 *reth* has been elected there has been disagreement between Gol 643 Nyikang and Gol Dhiang, presumably because the two chiefs failed 666 to reach agreement. It was the disagreement between these two 669 which produced civil war between the two halves of the country, or

11. The "canvassing" of one of the sons of *reth* Fadiet never amounted to opposition.

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government intervention in the past. As several of the electors said, "if there had not been agreement between the chiefs of Gol Dhiang and Gol Nyikang, we should have gone home, each behind our leader" —presumably to prepare for war. 631 643 666 669

At the meetings of the electoral college etiquette was very strict, and as far as we could make out, the order, in theory, was that the chief of Gol Nyikang proposes a candidate to the chief of Gol Dhiang; no doubt this is in fact discussed privately by the two chiefs. The chief of Gol Dhiang replies agreeing to the proposal (or not, as the case may be). In fact there is not much more for the other members to say, though they doubtless know before hand, and may even have some say in who is to be the candidate proposed by their chief. Should any chief or notable, outside the electoral college, be sitting at their meeting, as did in fact happen, he would be very careful not to do more than listen. He would feel it quite out of place to express an opinion, however important his position might be. We think that on the surface at least considerable honour was paid to the observance of this etiquette. It would, however, have been odd if there had not been a great deal of "lobbying." 631 643 666

During the interval between the death of a *reth* and the election of his successor and his initial establishment in Fashoda there is an awkward period in which the Shilluk feel a sense of potential danger. Custom requires that all *nyireths*, potential claimants to the throne, should remain at home. Should anyone among them wish to defy custom and try to obtain a following to instal himself in Fashoda, this is his chance. After the electoral college has agreed upon a new *reth* the chances of a pretender become much less, though the period of danger is never quite over till after the installation of the chosen *reth* by Nyikang in Fashoda. The danger from ambush, illness, or disaster attributed to the *reth* always exists. 643 669

The procedure for seizing the throne of Fashoda by force is as follows. A *nyireth* who is living in a section of the Shilluk, and who fancies his chances of becoming *reth*, persuades, or is persuaded by the chief of his settlement or section to start an insurrection; without the co-operation of the *nyireth* and his chief an insurrection is impos- 643 669 622

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643 sible, for only the settlement chief can call up the necessary force of
669 warriors. Equally an insurrection must centre round a *nyireth*, for
[627] only *nyireths* are eligible to become *reths*. (It is for this reason that Shilluk custom enjoins upon all *nyireths* to remain quietly at home, as a safeguard, during an interregnum.) The procedure then varies with the fortunes of war. It seems probable that one settlement—there are some 100 settlements in the Shilluk country—would not of itself be able to start openly a campaign of violence. Should the electoral college fail to agree upon a single choice, then there would be a good chance of a pretender rallying half the kingdom to his cause, as Cuti Ajang succeeded in doing in 1917.

643 When the electoral college has settled upon a choice, the initial formalities take place very quietly, as if to avoid attracting attention. The new *reth* (who will not be *reth* in full sense till Nyikang has installed him) is brought by the chief of Gol Nyikang, traditionally after a mock duel, though we doubt whether this is obligatory. He is brought stealthily and by night, and at early dawn a bull is speared at Fashoda, and he is taken into the house favoured by his father in his life time in Fashoda, where he has to step over a sheep, held prostrate at the entrance to the house, and has a string of beads tied on to his ankle. The spearing of the bull and the tying on of the beads both symbolize his new status of what we may call *reth*-elect. We think the spearing of the bull is the more significant.

It is interesting that on this first day Anei was obviously under the stress of great emotion, natural in one who overnight, finds himself translated into the incarnation of the tribal hero, who is so closely descended from God.

● 631 Immediately on being introduced to Fashoda the *reth*-elect starts
643 to receive the homage, unoffically and without ceremony, of the chiefs of his kingdom. They come from all parts of the country, and for a chief to fail to come would be a sign of disaffection, or at best gross
643 discourtesy. The *reth's* brothers too all come, or should come, to
644 pay homage, and other *nyireths* as well. His brothers appear to bear

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643 We did not witness the selection of the bead. During the *reth*'s stay
[778] at Debalo the period of amnesty for adulterers and seducers, which is mentioned by Munro, comes into effect. Adulterers and seducers of unmarried girls are able to avoid the full legal consequences of their
[684 sins by paying a small fine in goats and sheep to the *reth*. A few
696] Shilluk took advantage of this, and some thirty sheep and goats were brought in.

During the period of semi-seclusion, apart from the preparation, both parties remained comparatively inactive. After three days all was ready for the final and public phases of the installation ceremonies.

## The Installation Ceremonies.

631 The conventional opposition between the northern and southern
643 divisions, of the country Gol Dhiang and Gol Nyikang, now becomes
616 clearer. The boundary between them is the watercourse called Arepejur, which means "the gathering of the peoples", and which lies about half a mile to the south of Fashoda. Headed by the chief of Gol Nyikang, chiefs, warriors and headmen had been flocking in to Debalo to join forces with the *reth*-elect, and it is their traditional duty to guard him and to support him in his struggles with Nyikang. Nyikang has taken up residence at Adodo a few miles north of Fashoda, and the people who live north of the boundary muster to his aid. The three days semi-seclusion of the *reth* at Debalo and Nyikang at Adodo is thus primarily a period of preparation for the mock battle to come. The march of the *reth* from Debalo and Nyikang from Adodo and their meeting on the high ground above Arepejur symbolizes the ceremonial division of the country into two moieties. The balance between them is strongly emphasized at all points. Nyikang must have his shield borne by a special bearer; so must the *reth*. Certain ritual objects, spears, beads, and the like must accompany the *reth*; others must be carried with Nyikang. Moreover, the joining in battle of the two parties, the capture of the *reth*, and the subsequent rites and ceremonies is an occasion in which all classes and sections of the Shilluk participate, and the formal election and installation of the new

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*reth* is ceremonially impressed upon the minds of all his people. It is the occasion when the *reth* is formally recognized by the Shilluk as a whole. The public nature of the ceremony must be emphasized because prior to it, only limited sections of society—Kwareth, Ororo and the Colo chiefs—have been concerned. 616 631 643

The ceremonies which are enacted on this day are divided into four distinct phases with a variety of ritual observance in each :- 643

1. The simultaneous march of the opposing armies to the high ground immediately south-west of Fashoda, and the mock battle which follows.
2. The capture of the *reth* by Nyikang, and the procession to the shrine of Nyikang in Fashoda.
3. The enthronement of the effigy of Nyikang on the sacred stool, the substitution of the *reth* for Nyikang on the stool, and the possession of the *reth* by the spirit of Nyikang.
4. The retirement of the *reth* into the temporary camp, which is specially built for the occasion on the open ground immediately facing the shrine.
5. The ritual lighting of new fire by the Ororo and Kwareth just before sundown.

The first two phases are public and concern the tribe as a whole. The third phase, which retains a degree of mystery, is witnessed by limited sections of the population from outside and is screened even from them by a canopy. The *reth's* retirement into the temporary camp concerns him and certain traditional functionaries alone, and the rites which follow are carried out in strict secrecy. The fire-making ceremony concerns chiefly the inhabitants of Fashoda and the *reth's* immediate followers.

The main events of each phase are described from the records of all the observers who attended. We have deliberately avoided an over-detailed description of the events and behaviour of the participants,

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who held his left, walked across the open space in front of the shrine. Here another ox, this time a black and white one, also swathed in white cloth and covered over the back with a leopard-skin decorated at the edges with cowrie shells, was tethered. Beside it stood two men of Kwa Ojul, one holding a crude straight-bladed sword, the other holding a spear. These were said to be yet further weapons of Nyikang, and each in turn was handed to the *reth*, who stood at the tail end of the ox, and with each he made three passes in the air over the back of the ox, which was then led off to be sacrificed.

## The Temporary Camp.

After this ceremony, the *reth*, still accompanied by the chief of Kwa Nyikwom and by the small girl *nyakwer*, entered the screen, which surrounded the temporary huts, and he himself entered the larger of them. These huts were built under the personal supervision of Jago Yor Leiker and Jago Tabo, the chiefs of the south and north. The huts were built of grass, and similar to those built in Shilluk cattle camps. The larger was considered the *reth's* temporary residence, the smaller the kitchen, where his food should be prepared and where the water was heated for the ritual bathing. The bull mentioned above was stripped of its coverings, which were again torn to pieces by the crowd, and the leopard skin was taken into the shrine of Nyikang. The bull was speared and fell to the ground immediately in front of the *reth's* temporary camp. After this the public part of the first day's ceremonies was over. The *reth* had retired into seclusion, and those Shilluk who had remained to watch the ceremony of the stool soon dispersed and went off to rest in the shade around Fashoda. Only the Ororo, Kwareth and Kwa Nyikwom, the immediate attendants of the *reth*, remained to guard him and minister to his wants.

The effigies of Nyikang and Dak had already been carried into the shrine. The drums were also put away, and the sacred stool, which had been carelessly left with the canopy draped over it, was carried off, the canopy held around it so that no one could see it go,

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SPEECH DAY.

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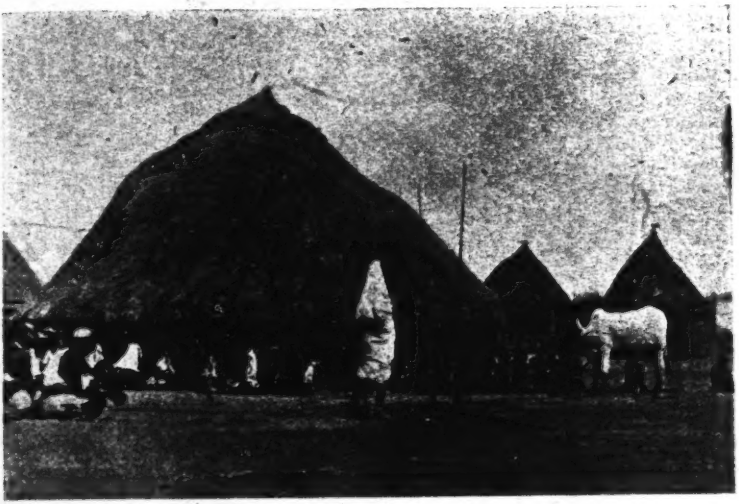
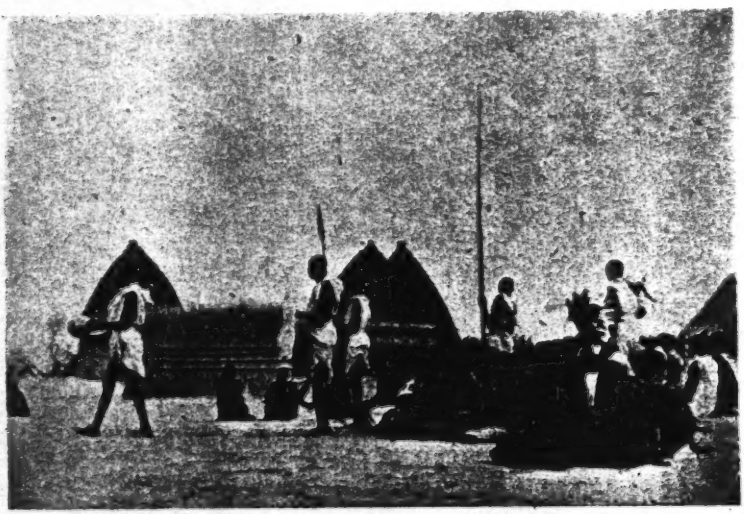


1.—Each chief, after making his speech, sticks a spear into the ground before the *reth* as a sign of homage.



2.—The *reth's* party below Aturwic, with the spears and shield of Nyikang. The drummer in front is beating a tattoo as a sign of appreciation of the speech just delivered.

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behind him was a bearer carrying a fan made from both wings of the Saddle-billed stork joined in the middle like the letter W. He was wearing a silver bracelet on each wrist, and came down from the mound carrying two spears, each head downwards. After being seated on the stool, these spears were taken back by the chief of the Kwa Nyikang to Aturwic. A big white bull was then brought by the Ororo and tied to a stake north of the assembly.

Then the chiefs came forward one by one carrying a spear, head downwards: sometimes two got up together and a short argument arose, but the question was quickly settled by precedence. Some forty or fifty chiefs and elders each had their say in turn, and after each speech the spokesman thrust his spear into the ground: if his speech met with approval (not we think the approval of the *reth* but of the drummer) he was given a tattoo on the drum, and escorted part of the way back to his place by the drummer drumming. The distance he was escorted depended on the merit of his speech. One chief, of Bur Nyiliec, came with no spear, and instead he laid a small object, probably a bead, reverently on the ground.

Most of the speeches, each of which lasted between two and five minutes, were rather trite; the following is a resumé of the more common or interesting points:-

"Anei has been elected *reth* without dissentient voice; all the Shilluk from Mwomo up to Tonga want him as their *reth*."

"All classes of Shilluk society, *kwa reth*, *bang reth*, and *colo* recognize you, Anei, as *reth*, for there was no fight on your appointment."

"The *reth* is alone and has no favourites."

"Assist your chiefs and help them to keep order."

A somewhat discordant note was struck by the chief of Tonga: "our job is not to keep order; that is your job. Our duty is to supply you with choice morsels of hippo meat."

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537 An untraditional but common topic was: "The Government
631 needs no introduction, you and it must co-operate; it is not like the
643 Dervishes or Turkia; you must help to collect its taxes."

644 The speeches opened with Jago Yor Leiker, the chief of Gol Nyikang, and Jago Tabo, the chief of Gol Dhiang, and finished with the chiefs of the marches Jago Ongwany of Mwomo and Jago Ding of Tonga. Each chief stuck the spear into the ground before the *reth* when his speech was ended, so that there remained a veritable forest of spears in front of the *reth* after the speech-making was over.

After Jago Ding's speech there was a short silence, after which the company started a chant to Nyikang and the *reth*. Then the *reth* got up and addressed his people, for now for the first time he was truly installed on the stool of Nyikang, and was fully become *reth*. "I have become your *reth*", he said, "and I will rule you and justify those who are aggrieved."

643 The assembly then arose, and the *reth* moved over to where the
782 white bull was tied. He made passes over its back with a spear, and retired. The Ororo came up, and after an abortive attempt which bent the spear, they stabbed the bull. The spears stuck in the ground were taken, some by Jago Yor Leiker, some by the men of Akwobai, who had gone to Kosti; and some by Kwa Wung.

643 After this came the final ceremony. The *reth*, accompanied
644 by a few chosen followers, was introduced to each house in Fashoda by the chief of Kwa Nyikang. There are many sites in the south east side of Fashoda where there used, in the days of *reth* Fadiet, to be houses, but Fashoda is smaller now. Tradition is strong however, and the *reth* was solemnly introduced to those sites, and told their names, and whose responsibility it was to rebuild them. When he came to the favourite house of his father *reth* Kur, a sheep was brought and prostrated before the door. The *reth* stepped over it and passed into the house, and the installation ceremonies were ended.

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Such was the atmosphere as Nyikang left for home after his thirtieth installation. 643 778

## NOTES

1. The Great Divisions of the Shilluk Kingdom. The Shilluk kingdom is divided into two parts in two different ways. An archaic religious division into two "sees" called Gol Nyikang (south) and Gol Dhiang (north) seems only to be important on ceremonial occasions such as the installation of the *reth* or the rebuilding of Fashoda. Each "see" has one ceremonial chief. 631 616

Investigation has shown that these two "sees" are not coterminous with the two great temporal provinces of Gerr and Luak. The traditional boundary between Gerr (northern province) and Luak (southern province) is some 15 miles south of Fashoda between the sections of Both and Fathau. The sections from Both northwards to Yoiny are small sections composed of a succession of small villages, which the Shilluk liken to the beads of an ostrich eggshell necklace and call collectively Wirek (an ostrich eggshell necklace).

In the 19th. century there was opposition between Gerr and Luak over rival candidates for the *reth*ship, when the Turkish Government tried to get Ajang accepted as *reth*, and between Akol and Kur, Gerr supporting Ajang and Kur, and Luak supporting Kwikwon and Akol. 616 631 669 643

When the two great provinces mobilized against each other for civil war, for their organization is primarily military, the small sections of Wirek were overawed or defeated by the forces of Luak, though they should have mobilized with Gerr, and they turned traitor.

After *reth* Kur returned from Omdurman and defeated the forces of Akol (Luak and Wirek) and exiled Akol, the old boundary was restored, and Wirek returned once more to Gerr.

This is one of the few occasions when we diverge from Pumphrey's account of the Shilluk *S. N. R.* Vol. 24 p. 27 ("The Shilluk Tribe"). The distinction between the two sets of divisions becomes clearer when dealing with an occasion such as the installation of the *reth*. [114]

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## APPENDIX I.

### DETAILS OF CHIEFS COMPOSING THE ELECTORAL COLLEGE.

The following chiefs composed the electoral college in 1943:-

1. Chief of Debalo Kwom (chief of Gol Nyikang).
2. " " Golbainy " " " Dhiang).
3. " " Mwomo.
4. " " Tonga.
5. " " Delal Ajak.
6. " " Bur Nyiliec (Athodwoi division).
7. " " Othecogo (Detwok division).
8. " " Fadit (Wau division).
9. " " Owaliny Obwa (Malakal division).
10. " " Adodo Dettim.
11. " " Fanyikang.
12. " " Acago (Detwok division).
13. " " Fadiang (Golbainy division).
14. " " Yoiny (Fashoda division).

Nos. 1, 2, 3, 4 are explained adequately in the text.

Nos. 5, 8, and 11 are the traditional big chiefs, whose ancestors held the *lan dwong* or "high robe of office" from Nyikang. They are still in possession of the *lan dwong*.

Nos. 7 and 10 have only recently been displaced by Government from the *lan dwong* owing to inefficiency. The *lan dwong* will naturally tend to revert to their lineages when a vacancy occurs.

Nos. 6 and 9 are chiefs with an ancient claim to the *lan dwong* which their ancestors possessed in the days of Nyikang. They have sunk into unimportance, because of the shrinkage of their lineage.

Nos. 12, 13 and 14 are the three Kwareth members.

Nos. 13, the chief of Fadiang, is looked upon as the chief of all the Kwareth.

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The Electoral College of 1903 consisted of 12, 13 and 14, 1, 2, 7, 8. (only seven names are given). 631 643 666

The Electoral College of 1917 consisted of 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 7, 8, 10, 12, 13. There also appeared the chief of Athodwoi, in place of the chief Bur Nyiliec (6), and the chiefs of Nyigir, Abienyai (in Detwok division), and Kodok. The chiefs of Bur Nyiliec, Owaliny Obwa, Fanyikang and Yoiny were not present. The chief of Abienyai may have represented the chief of Yoiny.

It is noteworthy that in 1917 the chiefs of Kwom and Golbainy and the Kwareth chiefs of Fadiang and Acago were all bribed by Coti Ajang, the pretender. This is an indication of who were the most influential chiefs in the college. N.B. The chief of Yoiny was not there to be bribed. [662]

## APPENDIX II.

### NYIKANG AND DAK, AND THE EQUIPMENT CARRIED WITH THEM.

*Nyikang and Dak.*

The effigy of Nyikang was made up of a tubular framework of bamboo rods covered with blue check imported cloth. The body at the top appeared to be about 14 inches in diameter tapering to about 9 inches. Wound round the top and tied in a knot like a cravat was a separate piece of cloth hanging down below the base of the body. On the first two days of Nyikang's journey this 'cravat' was of black cloth. When the party reached Golbainy, it was of the same blue check cloth as the body. The head of the effigy consisted of a mop-like plume of black ostrich feathers which hung down over the knot in the cravat. Overall the effigy was about 5 feet long. 643 778

The effigy of Dak was differently constructed. It consisted of a long bamboo pole, about 8 feet in length, with a cylindrical body of the same blue cloth some 2 foot 6 inches long, at the top of the pole. The head was made of a smaller bunch of black ostrich feathers than that of Nyikang.

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766 maiden was sealed up alive in the hut along with the corpse, which is also said to be traditional.

Fafiti Yor died in September 1943, and his funeral dance was held in November. Anei Kur died in November 1945, and his funeral dance was not held until October 1946. This longer interval was also more in accord with Shilluk custom, which holds that there should be an [643] interval of about a year between the death of a *reth* and the installation of a successor. The installation ceremonies should follow quickly upon the funeral dance for the deceased, and should take place after the harvest is ripe.

Two days before the dance, the remains of *reth* Anei were brought secretly, and by night, from Fadwol to Golbainy where his private village had been, and were buried in his house. The remains were brought by Ororo under the supervision of Gol Nyidhok, the descendants of Nyidhok, the grand father of Anei. The dance took place there and only occupied two days. It was less well attended, and the contingents not so well marshalled as in 1943, but the essential characteristics were the same, and there were the same arguments about how long it should last. The ceremonies were in the hands of the eldest son of the deceased, and of Kwanyireth Bol Acien, the chief of Lul, who had taken a large part in 1943. The chief of the Kwareth, who was senile in 1943, had died in the meantime, but his successor in office, a young man, took no part. The *reth* remained purposely in Fashoda, and did not come to Golbainy at all. It was noticed that, as bulls were slaughtered, the horns and tails were hung on to the palisade surrounding the house where *reth* Anei lay buried, and his cattle bells and other ornaments were displayed by *bangreth* in front of the tomb, spread out upon a bull skin.

### The election of Reth Dak Fadiet.

643 On the death of *reth* Anei the electoral college were summoned, 66 as in 1943, by Jago Tabo of Golbainy for Gol Dhiang and Jago 631 Yorleiker of Kwom for Gol Nyikang, the two great ceremonial divisions of the Shilluk kingdom. The composition of the college was the same as in 1943, except that the chiefs of Bur Nyiliec and Owaliny Obwa could not attend owing to illness. It was clearer to me than before that the choice rests entirely with the chiefs of Gol Dhiang and Gol Nyikang. I doubt whether even the chief of the Kwareth has any influence: he and the other members of the college have only to listen to the decision.

643 *Reth* Anei had not lived long enough to adopt a *nyireth*, as *reth*

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Fafiti had done. Opinion was decided that the succession lay with the sons of Fadiet, and as the electors gathered at Fashoda, so the sons of Fadiet left their homes and came within easy reach. This was a breach of tradition, which demands that all *nyireth* at such a time should remain quietly at home. It gave rise to certain fears among the chiefs that some *nyireth* might try to instal himself in vacant Fashoda by force. There was no evidence in the event that any *nyireth* had had such an intention. 643

The sons of Fadiet were not well known to the chiefs; unlike the sons of Kur, they had a reputation for being quiet and unassertive. There was no obvious choice designated, as Anei had been designated by Fafiti. The two king-makers reduced the sons of Fadiet to a short list of four names, and waited for a lead from me, as they could not decide upon any one of these four. After my suggestion that Dak Fadiet of Falo, one of their short list, would be a good choice, the chiefs at once agreed to him. There had been rumours of bribery, as in 1917, and two bribes were known to have been offered to, and refused by, Jago Tabo of Golbainy, the chief of Gol Dhiang. One had been offered by *nyireth* Nyikang Kur, a "princess" of evil repute, who wished her uterine brother, a son of *reth* Fadiet, to succeed. It appeared from a discussion with the two kingmakers that bribery on such a solemn occasion would result in certain death for the recipient at the hands of Nyikang and was out of the question. This may be so, and would be a reasonable tribal sanction to ensure an unbiassed choice. There was a suggestion from the southern Shilluk, where most of the sons of Fadiet live, that the electoral college with its northern bias would choose a *reth* from the north. There was no sign of this, because it was agreed at once that a son of Fadiet must succeed, and no one of these sons lived north of Fashoda. The feeling in the south that the north has more influence in Fashoda probably arose because the lines of *reth* Yor and *reth* Kur both come from the north and only that of *reth* Kwathker and his son Fadiet from the south. Fashoda itself is considered to be in the northern half of the kingdom. 643 666 [648] 662 643 666 [687] 643 666 631

Dak Fadiet was initially installed, and ceremonially washed and shaved by Ororo girls in Fashoda on 18.11.45. He was followed by a large crowd of some hundreds of armed men from Gol Nyikang and particularly from his own area of Fanyidwai and all the Colo chiefs present. His following was much larger than that of Anei in 1943. The crowd may have been expressing simple gratification that at last a *reth* had come from the south; they may have been there to try and prevent a candidate from the north being installed. But the ceremony 643

20: Thomson G-5 (1945-1946) 1948 FJ23 Shilluk FJ23



beating the bounds of Shilluk land at Moro, north of Kaka. The details of their progress were similar to that of 1944. 643

The only observed difference between the preliminaries for Nyikang's journey was the embassy to Fanyikang to get *dom* fibre for the ceremonial ropes. This year it was performed by 'Anongo,' one of the uncrowned sons of Nyikang, and not by Dak as in 1944. The embassy this year only went to the *dom* palm forest at Obai Dego, which is 15 miles downstream of Fanyikang.

On 28.12.46 the *reth* was still at Fashoda, and not yet fled to Debalo Kwom. It was expected that he would go before dawn on 29.12.46. Fashoda was full of his personal supporters from the southern Shilluk. I noticed that the *reth* had apparently made friends with the *nyireth* whom he had recently suspected of trying to ambush him.

The *reth* started for Debalo secretly at about 3.00 a.m. on 29.12.46. After resting half way, he entered Debalo, after the village had ceremonially resisted him three times. He stepped over a black sheep, held by Ororo. When he entered, his supporters all broke into one of the songs of Nyikang. This was a mistake, as the whole proceeding should have been secret. The *reth* stayed at the same broken down house as in 1944, and the same royal house was prepared, and left empty.

Jago Yorleiker, the chief of Gol Nyikang, was in charge of the ceremonies. All the fires had been put out before the *reth's* arrival, and preparations had been made to light new fire by the ceremonial method of *pic mac*. This method is later used at Fashoda and is described in our previous article (op. cit. p. 65). A bull was brought by Jago Yorleiker, which was to be speared when the *reth* came out of seclusion to be greeted by the assembled chiefs of Gol Nyikang in the evening. The chiefs of Gol Dhiang had no business in Debalo, and if they came, they would come as observers. Some sheep were brought by self-confessed adulterers. The *reth* insisted that only adulterers whose cases had not previously been opened could avail themselves of this privilege of amnesty, but in the event a few men tried to avoid a judgment debt by paying a sheep. There is some confusion about the ownership of these sheep. It seems clear that they belong to the *reth*, but are presented by him to the chief of Debalo Kwom (himself the chief of Gol Nyikang) as a recognition for his services in sheltering the *reth* in Debalo. In 1944 the chief of Gol Nyikang appropriated the sheep without permission.

That evening the drums of Nyikang were heard from Nyigir, and the *reth's* drums from Debalo. The procession carrying the sacred beads *Ocoro* from Lul arrived at about 8.00 p.m.

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123 643 country to the other, a distance of about one hundred and sixty miles. Here, with the help of Mr. J. L. Baker and Mr. J. O. Udal, I can only supplement our previous accounts by recording actual observations made on this occasion with additional information from Shilluk who attended. Mr. Baker was unfortunately transferred to another district a few days before the final ceremonies.

Before describing the events as they occurred on this occasion, it will be as well to summarise the main features of the ceremonies according to traditional practice. In the installations of the various Shilluk *reths* of which we have records there has been no great deviation from the general principles and what differences are found concern the actual timing and minor alterations in ritual.

### *The rôle of Nyikang*

643 776 778 We have already seen that when the soul of Nyikang has finally left the person of the late *reth*, he appears in effigy at Akurwa. This effigy, together with that of Dak, son of Nyikang, made of bamboo and ambatch surmounted by huge plumes of ostrich feathers[a], sometimes appear in public during the lifetime of a *reth*: normally they are dormant and their principal functions are concerned with the installation ceremonies. Nyikang is everywhere, but for the moment his personality is concentrated in this effigy. To the Shilluk the effigy is Nyikang, so that in all our accounts we have always spoken of Nyikang meaning both the effigy and the spirit: the two are indistinguishable. [781] Throughout the ceremonies the effigies are treated by the Shilluk with a mixture of hilarity and dread; mixed emotions which are always apparent. When all the preparations have been completed, Nyikang and Dak are carried forth from the shrine at Akurwa and beat the bounds of Shilluk country to the north. They are carried by [644] men of the *kwu* Nyikwom and surrounded by a bodyguard of the same clan armed with whips to clear the people from their path. They then march southwards on Fashoda.

### *The flight of the reth to Debalo*

643 [651] As soon as the *reth* hears that Nyikang draws near, he abandons the capital and retreats to the village of Debalo a few miles south of Arepejur, the watercourse which is the boundary between the two ceremonial divisions of Shilluk country, Gol Dhiang (the north) and Gol Nyikang (the south). These divisions are of great importance in the installation ceremonies and on other occasions have no real significance. The *reth* is always supported in the conventional hostilities which follow by the occupants of Gol Nyikang, and Nyikang, in his march from Akurwa to Fashoda is supported by Gol Dhiang; *gol*, literally "homestead," and a word used to describe the smallest domestic unit of Shilluk society, here merely means "home" or "country of." The origin of these two divisions is historical and the names themselves have no direct connection with the conventional opposition displayed during the installation. The two ceremonial divisions do not correspond exactly (though nearly) with similar divisions, Gerr and Luak, which have a periodic significance in quite another context[b]. At Debalo, the *reth* remains in strict seclusion for three days, guarded by day and night, and the village is not open to anyone who is not a personal attendant or from the divisions of Gol Nyikang. The belief that he is in danger is expressed in a number of ways, including the lighting of fires all round the village at night and the fact that although a special house is built and most carefully decorated in the royal manner to receive him, he actually sleeps in one of the more dilapidated and less conspicuous houses.

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[a] See Thomson, *op. cit.* p. 139.

[b] Howell & Thomson, *op. cit.* p. 75 (I).

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*The march of the armies and the mock battle*

After three nights in seclusion in Debalo, during which his followers are mustering from the south, the *reth* is challenged by Nyikang to come forth to fight and messengers are sent for this purpose. Accompanied by *Nyakwer*, "the girl of the ceremonies," who plays an important part in subsequent events, by various relics of Nyikang, by his shield and spear-bearers and his army, the *reth* marches on the capital, crossing Arepejur on the way, and attacks the army of Nyikang by then drawn up just west of Fashoda. In this battle he is defeated, captured by Nyikang and carried off to the shrine of Nyikang (*Cerfuc*) nearby.

*The substitution on the sacred stool*

In front of this shrine the sacred stool of Shilluk kings, the *kwom*, is set shrouded from the public by a canopy of white cloth. Nyikang is placed upon this, but after a time is whisked away and the *reth* takes his place. This act of substitution and enthronement, perhaps the most significant act of all the ceremonies, is the point where the *reth* is possessed by the spirit of Nyikang.

*The temporary camp*

Shortly after this the *reth* is carried to a temporary camp (*Adul*), where, after a sacrifice, he is washed and purified. He remains there in strict seclusion, guarded by the *ororo*.

*The vigil in Athurwic*

On the next evening, he ascends into *Athurwic*[1], the imposing mound which dominates the capital and on which are four well-built houses. It is said that he is enticed there by a woman of the *ororo*, leaving *Nyakwer* behind, forgotten and neglected. After two nights, word is brought to him that Nyikang has seized her on the grounds that she has been married with cattle from the royal herd: these are his, Nyikang's property, not that of a man who has not yet been confirmed in his position as *reth*.

*The final struggle with Nyikang*

Challenged, the *reth* comes down from the mound with his followers, while Nyikang moves forward to attack him right in the centre of Fashoda. In a furious battle which follows, the *reth* succeeds in wresting *Nyakwer* from Nyikang and retires into *Athurwic* once more. Shortly afterwards, Nyikang ascends the mound and makes his peace with the *reth* and there follows a ceremonial inspection of the houses of the capital and fines are imposed on those clans who have not fulfilled their obligation to repair them. The *reth* has now been accepted by Nyikang whose official and public functions are over. Later he retires again to Akurwa.

*Speech Day*

On the final day, the chiefs of the country assemble below the mound and the *reth*, accompanied by his drummer and shield-bearer, comes down to meet them. Each chief in turn addresses the *reth* and, after declaring his allegiance, exhort him to do his duty and to treat his people justly. The *reth* is then conducted again round the houses of Fashoda over which he now has complete control.

In this brief summary, I have drawn attention only to the most important features of the installation. There is naturally a wealth of ritual carried out at each stage of the ceremonies. From the accounts of the accession of *reth* Fafiti in 1917, *reth* Anei in 1944 and *reth* Dak in 1946, we have a clear picture of the slow and colourful process by which a *reth* is chosen and installed. Each stage has its religious and secular aspects and in the short description of the installation of *reth* Kur *wad* Fafiti which follows, it will be

[1] Variously spelt: *Aturwic, Athudowic, Athurwic.*

24: Howell E-5 (1951-1952) 1953 FJ23 Shilluk FJ23



Thus Nyikang emerged from his shrine in an angry mood. The people fell in procession behind the effigies and, dancing and singing, circled the shrine and then set off for the *gol* Onger where the whips of the *kwa* Nyikwom are stored. Both Nyikang and Dak entered this house, and when they came out again a third effigy, that of Cal,[a] was with them. Cal was the brother of Dak and his effigy is made with grey (female) ostrich feathers in contrast to the black feathers of the others. The drum began to beat louder and faster, the singing increased in tempo and all the time the crowds gathered. Simultaneously at the other end of Fashoda, the *reth's* forces were gathering round the mound, the *reth's* police in their scarlet *laus* again conspicuous on the left flank.

There followed a succession of sallies by the assembled forces of Nyikang and the *reth* from opposite ends of the capital. First Nyikang would surge forward and the shield-bearer of the *reth* would conduct the temporary retirement of the *reth's* forces, rattling the bells inside the shield in defiance of Nyikang. Then it would be the turn of the *reth's* followers to advance menacingly and for Nyikang to withdraw in the same manner. Finally a bull was brought forward to be cast on the ground so that the *reth* could step over it before going on to seize *Nyakwer*.[b] Once again the casting was mismanaged and with a disdainful wave of his hand, the *reth* motioned to his retainers to drag the bull out of the way, and swept on to wrest *Nyakwer* from the clutches of Nyikang. Millet stalks began to fly and as the *reth's* party returned to the safety of *Athurwic*, an unsuccessful counter-attack was staged by Nyikang. Its failure was obvious and the drummer then beat the retreat of Nyikang and his men towards the shrine. They did not enter it immediately and although Nyikang had never reached the summit of the mound, he and his followers marched round the shrine and appeared to be about to renew the onslaught. Such forces of the *reth* as remained on the ground seemed to melt away into the host of Nyikang, but somehow the new attack never materialised, despite much drumming and singing, marching and counter-marching for a period of some ten minutes, while the *reth's* guard stood watch on the slopes of *Athurwic*. Nyikang, tired of the proceedings, finally withdrew into his shrine, while Dak, Col and his supporters, perhaps disappointed, gathered outside to sing and dance his praises. The battle for *Nyakwer* had ended.

*Speech Day*

The sequel of events on this occasion followed former precedents. The *reth* came down from *Athurwic* surrounded by the *ororo* and sat down on the covered stool, while a fan made from one wing of a saddle bill stork was held to shade him. He did not, however, step over a sheep as had happened at previous installations. The chiefs of the country, with the exception of those from the east bank who had been discouraged from attending on account of the epidemic of cerebro-spinal meningitis there, sat opposite the *reth* on the ground at about twenty-five yards distance.

[a] See Howell and Thomson, *op. cit.*, p. 79.
[b] *Ibid.* p. 79, Note 21.

24: Howell E-5 (1951-1952) 1953 FJ23 Shilluk FJ23



537 643 *Jago* Yorleiker, the chief of Gol Nyikang, rose to make the first speech, carrying a spear in his hand. A delay occurred as the *reth's* drummer was missing and had to be found. Then *jago* Yorleiker, followed by *jago* Thabo of Golbainy and titular chief of Gol Dhiang, and other chiefs in order of precedence came forward to address the *reth* on his installation. Nearly all [411 184] carried presentation spears which were thrust into the ground in front of the *reth*, though one or two, as in the case of *kwanyireth* Akwei Anyong of Detwok, placed a bead on the ground. The speeches were on the whole short, and took the form of exhortations to the *reth* to emulate his father's example and to work closely with the Government; to pay attention to his elder advisers; to visit all the Shilluk lands and to avoid favouritism; to deal fairly with the [576] Shilluk. As each speaker finished he was applauded by the rattling of Nyikang's shield and the beating of the drum, for longer or shorter periods according to the quality, or perhaps, acceptability, of the speech. Those who were most honoured were accompanied back to their place by the shield-bearer before the latter turned to signal out the next speaker. Last of all the chiefs to [631] speak were *jago* Ongwany *wad* Kak and *jago* Kwathi *wad* Kudjok of Tonga, the traditional wardens of the Shilluk Marches at the northern and southern extremities of their country.

[428] Finally the *reth* rose to speak. He walked forward to where rows of spears had been stuck in the ground and there, amid reverent interjections of *uuo* from the assembled Shilluk, he harangued the chiefs for their failure to produce the cattle of the late *reth* which were his just due.*

As he spoke he paced backwards and forwards along the lines of spears, evoking grudging grunts of agreement to his apparently rhetorical questions. Having delivered his speech, he stepped back, took hold of the ceremonial 643 sword and made passes over the back of the white bull with a black face which 782 had been tethered on his right. A Shilluk then speared the bull, again with considerable lack of skill, and the *reth* departed on his tour of the royal houses [578] of Fashoda. A slight altercation broke out over who was to have which spears presented by the Chiefs, but the installation of *reth* Kur *wad* Fafiti, the thirty-second *reth* of the Shilluk, was over.

* As explained in a previous article (*S.N. & R.*, Vol. 33, Part 1) the immediate and personal heirs of the late *reth* had attempted to conceal many of the cattle which are royal property and should go to his successor.

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766 535 at length the drums cease to throb, the last of the animals are sacrificed and the meat distributed to the dancers and the people disperse to their homes. The king is dead. . . .

643 666 [642] [669] The country has not, however, remained without a king all this time. The period of interregnum is one of disquiet, and there is always the real fear that one of the nyireth may make a bid for the throne. As soon as possible, then, after the king's death, within a few days in fact, the electorate council meets to choose the new king. This council is made up of eleven chiefs of the Colo, the descendants of the original companions of Nyikang, and three members of the royal houses.

[175] [631] When Nyikang first settled the country he divided it into eleven major districts, appointing a chief to each. These chiefs were all Colo since, as Nyikang was the first Reth, the Kwareth had not then come into being. These eleven chiefs form the board of electors, and with them sit three of the [614] Kwareth, one from each of the three royal houses, those of Papiti, Fadiet and Yor, whose sons are eligible for the kingship. Among these three families there may be as many as forty or fifty nyireth, entitled as such to consideration for the vacant throne. It is generally accepted, however, though not a hard and fast rule, that the three royal families should provide a king in rotation, and it is certainly understood that the family of the late king is automatically ruled out. Attention is therefore concentrated on the claims of the candidates from the other two houses, with the weight of opinion in favour of that one which has the more remotely provided a king. Many of the nyireth are eliminated at once on account of old age, extreme youth, physical debility, weakness of character, etc., and the merits and demerits of the rest are given serious consideration, until the number is reduced to half a dozen or less from among whom the final choice is made. How selection is finally made is the secret of the council. Sometimes the late king may have 'adopted' a certain nyireth, and thus indicated his wish in the matter of his successor. Such an indication does not mean that the king's protégé will certainly be chosen but it will have great